

the Royal

MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Pet. 2:9

Week 26 Letters, Chapter 1

This week was the beginning of week of the new book in the Royal series; "Letters." These are the Epistles that the apostles wrote to all the different churches that were spread throughout the greater Roman Empire of the 1st Century. Though all of Scripture is profitable to all Christians, these epistles are especially beneficial because they give us the practical application of how we should conduct ourselves before men and God. Paul specifically gives great instruction on daily living issues to the churches that he writes to, and these instructions are perfect still for us two thousand years later.

What we will focus on this week are the following:

1. Examining the 5 epistle observations as stated by Pastor Miles in the bulletin this week.
2. Review the sermon text of Philippians 1, by looking at who wrote the letter, to whom was it written to, why it was written, and what is the author's content suggesting.
3. We will continue in our "Read, Reflect, and Respond" through 1 Thessalonians 1. The main concept you should focus on, is the integrity of our faith. Are we people that others can see the love of Christ actively portrayed in our day to day lives?

Hopefully this discussion will allow everybody share struggles and strengths in their faith, and see areas of improvement.

Isn't it fun studying Scripture!!!!

In Him,

Rock Church Small Group Team

Part 1: Opening/Recap Weekly Challenge/Small Group Sermon Discussion

Opening

- Open in Prayer
- Worship (optional)
- Recap Week 25 Homework
- Small Group Sermon Discussion

Recap Week 25 Weekly Challenge

- 1. Recite Luke 12:15.**
- 2. Discuss experiences practicing them Study.**

Small Group Sermon Discussion

1. Review the 5 Epistles Observations

- 1.** Epistles make up 21 of the 27 books of the New Testament (NOTE: All New Testament books are epistles except for the four gospels, Acts and Revelation).
- 2.** Epistles were letters written to either a group or an individual for a specific occasion.
- 3.** Epistles were written to address issues in the 1st century church.
- 4.** Epistles usually address one of four issues:
 - Behavior needing correction.
 - Warning against false teachings.
 - Misunderstanding between author and audience.
 - Encouragement.
- 5.** Epistles cannot mean to us now what it did not mean to them then.

2. Review Philippians 1 from the sermon as a group.

- 1. Who** wrote the epistle? **Answer:** Paul (Phil. 1:1).
- 2. To whom** was it written? **Answer:** Christians, or saints in Philippi (Phil. 1:1).
- 3. Why** was it written or what issue or conflict caused the letter to be written? **Answer:** To thank the saints (Phil. 1:3-5). Also to encourage unity in their common faith (Phil. 1:27-28; 2:1-2).
- 4. What** does the author say about that issue that caused the letter to be written? **Answer:** Be unified (Phil. 1:27-28).

Part 2: Read, Reflect, and Respond – 1 Thessalonians 1

Read 1 Thessalonians 1

The context of epistles is generally simple to understand. By doing simply pre-observation methods, we can determine the who, what, why, when, and where of every epistle. Just like we learned in the sermon review section, most of the New Testament are letters to a group of Christians, or individual, during the 1st century. As simple as getting the basic context is to do, it is equally important we get as much information as possible to make sure we are clear of the author's intent of every letter. Epistles are so crucial for modern-day Christians to teach us biblical truth, but they were not written to us, so we have to be diligent in finding out who the author wrote it to and for what purpose. Below we will look at 1 Thessalonians. We will briefly examine the context of the letter, so that when we read the letter through, certain terms and concepts make a little more sense:

1 Thessalonians Pre-observation

- ▶ The epistle was written by Paul around 51-52 AD to the church in Thessalonica. This is by many scholars account, the first epistle that Paul wrote.
- ▶ Thessalonica was one of the first congregations founded by the apostle. In Acts 18, Luke describes the events surrounding the reason for the epistle. We also know based on Acts 18, that Paul wrote this epistle from Athens.
- ▶ The main reason for Paul to write to the Thessalonians was two-fold:
 - For the Thessalonians to live holy lives.
 - And to explain the destiny of Christians when they die.
- ▶ The second point is clearly seen in every chapter. There was much controversy in Thessalonica about the things surrounding the return of Christ and what will happen to all of us believers when that happened.
- ▶ There was also concern that Jesus had already returned. This naturally sent certain Christians into a panic and frenzy. Chapter 5 gives encouragement that "He will come like a thief in the night" for His Church. Basically stating that we will definitely know when He returns.

- ▶ 1 Thessalonians as a group.

The first chapter is more of an encouragement of the proof of their faith toward those in the Macedonia and Achaia area. The following questions deal specifically with the first point of Paul's reason for writing the letter; that they/we live holy lives.

Reflect 1 Thessalonians 1

1. After reading the chapter as a group, have everyone go around and share what Paul thinks the status of the Thessalonians' church is at. Have everyone write them down on a list if necessary.

Part 2: Read, Reflect, and Respond – 1 Thessalonians 1 (continued)

Respond 1 Thessalonians 1

1. How does your life reflect your faith?

2. If your small group was the church of San Diego, would Paul write the same thing to your church? Could affirm all that he said to the Thessalonians would be the same things he would say to you?
 - ▶ This is a continuation of #1. But have everyone share individually what they think would be strong and weak points in their faith.

 - ▶ Whether things are strong or weak in the faith, take time to discuss how to improve or continue to grow in their faith.

Part 3: Weekly Challenge

- ▶ **Scripture Reading Guide:** Go through the devotions that correspond with each day. These are given to everyone in their lesson plan every week. (November 8 – November 14)
- ▶ **Scripture Memory:** “Because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your name sake.” **1 Thessalonians 1:5 (ESV)**
- ▶ **Bible Study Tool:** Navigate through www.blueletterbible.com and discover the great resources available for free for your personal gain.
- ▶ **Spiritual Formation Practice:** Each week we will introduce a “spiritual discipline” that each person can try to adapt to their personal devotion. This week is the **Discipline of Study.**

The discipline of study has been repeated week after week because in order to understand anything in its entirety, the discipline of pursuing it has to become an essential habit. Scripture is no different, and studying the various parables is even more crucial to study. Author’s intent of writing a historic document is always hard to grasp, but is possible to get to a clear understanding of.

So for the “Letters” and even to the end of the Royal series, we are going to really focus on study. We really want to challenge you to grow in the study and knowledge of the Word, so we can grow closer to Him.