

"Why Not Us?"

1 Thessalonians 1:5b-8

My dad is here today... (shoutout mom & dad). "There is no 'I' in 'Team.'" We lived by that.

We carried that into our church planting vision. Most church planters were flying solo when we moved here in 2010. Marsha and I, from the very beginning, said, "No. We see Jesus sending disciples out in teams. You never see Paul alone." Even in this letter, it's Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Ministry is so much better together. And be praying... God is adding to our Leadership Team in 2023: both internal leaders and those who move into Redemption Hill and join the mission God has given us.

"There is no 'I' in 'Team.'" Amen? AMEN! "There is no 'I' in 'Team.'"

BUT... there is a "U" in "Us." You follow me? You hear me? We need YOU. Redemption Hill needs you! For "Us" to be "Us," we need "U."

One of the great passions of my life is to see Jesus followers understand how important they are to God. I live to see the dreams and vision in the heart of God come to life in the hearts of everyday, ordinary Christians. What are some of those dreams? He has a mission for you. He wants his power to be made known through you. He wants to pour his life into you in such a way that you shine in a way that is unignorable to the people around you!

When Jesus sent out his 12 disciples, he did not roll with a 50/50 split. You 6 get my authority to love, preach, heal, cast out demons, and bless people in my name, but you other 6, "Well, good luck!" You hear me?

When Jesus sent out the 70, he sent all 70 to do the work of his kingdom, to preach and practice, declare and display, to show and tell! (Vision sermon?)

Jesus has a vision for yoU!

Objections: "Well, that's nice, but you don't know how messed I am." "I don't have their Bible knowledge or passion." "I don't have any experience. I don't know what to say or do."

Listen, you might be really messed up right now. You might not know much of the Bible. You might not have hardly any experience.

First off, you're more prepared than you think you are!

Second off, last time I checked, God himself is in you!

Third, God uses US in spite of US.

Was it because of you, that Jesus died for you? NO! Then what would make you think that it would be because of you that God would use you in the lives of others?

There is no I in Team, but there is a U in US. The question I'm asking us today is this: "Why Not Us?"

The question you're asking me is "Why not us, for what?"

TP: We can live as an exemplary church, by the filling of Jesus flowing through us.

We want to be the kind of church other churches in our area and even our future church plants can look to and say: "We want to love God and love people, including the lost, LIKE THEY DO."

1 Thess 1:5b-8 (text displayed)

3 Essential Rhythms of an Exemplary Church

1. Be filled with the life of Jesus. (1:5b-7)

Paul says, “You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.” In other words, what they said and how they lived were in harmony. The Thessalonians were likely skeptical about them, but they proved their sincerity. The word “proved” carries the idea of being tested and revealed as authentic like gold or some other valuable possession.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy so clearly displayed the life of Jesus that the Thessalonians wanted to “imitate” them.

- When you imitate someone, you copy their example. (*mimitai* - “mimic”)
- Some translations say, “you became followers.” If Paul stepped in this direction of love, they took the same step. When Timothy stepped out with humble service, they followed suit.
- My daughter, Kesed, loves to watch YouTube videos from her favorite artist, Moriah Elizabeth. She’ll watch a video. Two hours later, she’s produced another masterpiece! Who do you imitate? What about your favorite musicians? Do you imitate them when no one is watching? I know you do! I’m feeling karaoke night in our Community Groups.
- What is the secret of living a life worthy of imitation? How can we live as an exemplary church?
 - Look at the last three words of verse 5: “for your sake.” Everything these leaders did was others oriented. They knew people were watching. They considered the inevitable influence of their words and actions. What we say and do matters!
 - Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. That’s why Paul says: “and of the Lord.” As the Thessalonians imitated (mimicked, copied) the ways of Paul, Silas and Timothy, they were learning how to imitate Jesus, because they were laser focused on following Jesus. 1 Corinthians 11:1 - “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” (cf. Gal. 4:12, Phil. 3:17, 4:9, 1 Tim. 4:12, 1 Pet 5:3)

Paul shares two ways the Thessalonians copied their ways.

First, they received the word in much affliction and joy.

- Look at how this works.
 - Did Jesus go about doing good? Yes. Did he suffer great, even “severe” affliction? (That’s what the word “much” communicates here.) YES! His life ended, not with eulogies and accolades, but in crucifixion.
 - Did Jesus promise his followers they would experience trouble? (John 16:33). Paul was stoned and left for dead in Lystra. He and Silas were beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, then run out of town in Thessalonica.
 - Now these Thessalonians faced opposition and persecution. 1 Thess 2:14-15 says, “For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind...” It is likely some lost their lives.
- But amazingly, their suffering did not steal their joy! “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, *with the joy of the Holy Spirit.*”
 - Our external circumstances do not dictate our internal joy. Why? Because joy comes from God. If our circumstances can’t shake God, then they can’t shake God’s joy in us.
 - Joy is found where God is present! Joy is our response to a perceived good. Joy is our heart leaping over God’s goodness.

- This is what is so wild about following Jesus. We can go through the WORST life has to offer and still EXPERIENCE unshakable JOY!
- Let your joy speak to your circumstances. You might touch me, but you can't shake me. Why? Because my God lives in me, and I find my joy in him, not you! AMEN?!
- "Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God." (Psalm 43:3-4, written in the context of dejection and depression!)
- [[They early church wore suffering like a badge of honor! Acts 5:41 - rejoice counted worthy to suffer for his name. (See Acts 9:4 & Col. 1:24)]]

Two encouragements for living as an example

1) Be intentional about who you surround yourself with? Who are your closest friends? Who do you look to as a mentor?

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." - 1 Corinthians 15:33

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise. - Proverbs 13:20

2) Develop an insatiable appetite for more of Jesus!

- That's what LENT is about. Lent is a 40 day journey of prayer and fasting leading up to Easter where we reflect on the life and death of Jesus.
- We fast in order to feast. We take in less of the things of the world, be it food, technology, whatever, so that we can receive more of Jesus!
- **LENT... SLIDE**

As we imitate Jesus and people who live like Jesus, here's the result: "so that YOU [speaking to the entire church] became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia."

The Greek word for "example" is "*tupos*." It means to model. It is nearly synonymous with "imitate." People could now look at the life of this church (not just a few individuals) and copy their way of life.

T: We discover why in verse 8...

3 Essential Rhythms of an Exemplary Church

1. Be filled with the life of Jesus. (1:5b-7)

2. Sound forth the word of Jesus. (1:8a)

Word Study: "Sound forth."(*exēchētai*)

- The only time this word appears in the NT.
- In other ancient writings it was used "to describe a clap of thunder (Sir. 40.13), or the loud cry of a multitude (Philo, In Flaccum 39), a rumor that runs everywhere (3 Mace. 3.2)." (Green)
- What God was doing in Thessalonica "noised abroad." (Fee)

What sounded forth? "The word of the Lord."

- They did not whisper the word they received. They kicked up the volume (little louder, little louder, little louder until it reached concert level decibels).
- Some say, this was not them, but the word about them. In other words, they weren't actually moving

out from Thessalonica to share the message of Jesus with others? Here are a few problems with that.

- The word of the Lord is synonymous with “our gospel” in verse 5. Check it.
- Biblical examples.
 - Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica traveled with Paul and arrived with him in Syria and Jerusalem (Acts 20.4). Aristarchus also went with Paul to Ephesus on the second missionary journey (Acts 19.29), and he even accompanied him to Rome (Acts 27.2).
 - Jason joined Paul at Corinth (Romans 16:21)
- “Imitators of us...” What did they do? Traveled 1600 miles! Can’t exclude evangelism or surely Paul would not be so assertive about how they imitated him.

This is a GREAT SEASON to let the word “sound forth” like a clap of thunder, to run like a rumor, to turn the volume up where people can actually hear how great Jesus is.

Do we need to grow in this? Of course. (CHAT Survey - 7 Pursuits...)

Three Stories

Your Story → God’s Story → Their Story

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15 Second Story

There was a time in my life, I ____ & _____. Then I met Jesus. He ____ & _____ me. Now, I experience ____ & _____, because of him.

Do you have a story like that?

My testimony...

15 Second Story

There was a time in my life, I lived with misguided priorities & and relied on my own effort to take me places, even heaven. Then I met Jesus. He loved me & forgave me of my sin through his love on the cross. Now, I live with daily purpose & freedom!

Do you have a story like that?

So simple. so supernatural.

- What’s up? How you been?
- I been there.
- Here’s how God helped me.

30 seconds. 30 minutes. I doesn’t matter... And there’s no formula.

Three Stories

Your Story → God’s Story → Their Story
Their Story → Your Story → God’s Story

God's Story → Your Story → Their Story

This is the most important news, that meets our most important need. The most important decision a person will ever make is what they make of Jesus Christ.

Gospel - from a guitar...

- God's world was like a beautiful song... always in rhythm...
- We took the guitar out of his hands into ours. Not as beautiful, out of rhythm (pain, brokenness as the result of our sin).
- The Master Composer stepped into the band to get us back in sync with God's harmony. He did this through the cross. Instead of receiving the death we deserve, we now get life through his death and resurrection.
- How? Through repentance and faith - trusting in his work, returning to the rhythm for which we were made.

The word sounded forth, because they were taking this news (2 Corinthians 5:21; Rom 6:23) everywhere! But it was not just who they went to, but who was coming to them.

Notice Paul says "the word sounded forth from you in Macedonia and in Achaia."

How did this happen? Because Thessalonica was a port city, sitting on a major trade route, the Via Egnatia. In other words, people from Berea & Philippi (Macedonia) and Athens and Corinth (Achaia) were coming to Thessalonica where they saw the work and heard the words of Jesus through these new followers of Christ.

We are called to go, beautiful feet... YES! But people are coming to us too. This is why we started a church in Boston. The world is here! Touch Boston, touch the world!

Our vision is for nothing less than a multiplication movement from New England to the Nations.

3 Essential Rhythms of an Exemplary Church

1. Be filled with the life of Jesus. (1:5b-7)
2. Sound forth the word of Jesus. (1:8a)
3. Display a lifestyle of faith in Jesus. (1:8b)

It could be only further explaining how the word of the Lord sounded forth... but it seems to be a different but, of course, related dynamic: how they lived out their faith in Jesus. The text indicates this in two ways...

1) "not only" the word sounding forth. (we saw this last week - verse 5 - "not only in word, but also in power and in the HS, and with full conviction")

2) Paul is going to keep describing their faith in verse 9... The evidence of their faith was in their action, was in their holiness, was in the fact that they lived radically different lifestyles! This is part of how their faith was going forth "everywhere," Paul's hyperbolic way of describing the impact!

What do the Thessalonians teach us? It must be both! Speaking Jesus and living like Jesus.

Words without action is hypocrisy. Action without words is inauthenticity

One of the greatest barriers of those yet to believe in Jesus is actual hypocrisy (when I lives don't match our message) and assumed hypocrisy (when people assume Christians don't really live like Jesus). The greatest way to overcome assumed hypocrisy is actual authenticity. In other words, you are the greatest answer to this problem. Go show people Jesus. Let them see his love and compassion in you.

BUT... we also must use actual words, because just as much as words without action is hypocrisy, so action without words is inauthenticity.

Here's what I mean: If Jesus is in you, but you're always hiding Jesus, people don't know the real you.

The Finish

TP: We can live as an exemplary church, by the filling of Jesus flowing through us.

RHCC... As the winter months set in... we discovered our heating system was struggling to keep up. The technician came out, worked on it, thought he fixed it. The system would rise several degrees to a comfortable temperature, making it look like everything was fixed, only for it to fall the next day. This happened in December, and then again to start the year.

On January 6th, the technicians came back, climbed on the roof again, talked about some defrost coils that needed adjusted, even recommended that we buy another part that would give the system a boost (our new system we just installed two years ago, mind you, - to which we said, "no, thank you), but ultimately got it from 62 to 69, so the technician left, I stayed another couple of hours and watched the thermostat do YET ANOTHER free fall. We plugged in the space heaters again and had bit of a chilly Fire Nights that night.

We called the technician back. They came back on January 7, investigated it one more time, and finally got to the root of the issue. Pastor Reddy and I received this rather encouraging report...

The technician said (and I quote): "Your AC unit has been running this whole time blowing 50 degree air into the space." What?! C'mon bro!!

This is a picture of the Christian life. The world, our sinful desires, and Satan himself will seek to blow 50 degree air into the living space of our hearts. But our Father God, through the fire of his Word and Spirit, desires to warm us up, make us strong, give us everything we need to live the Christ life and honor him in everything.

WHY NOT US?

God of Revival...