

# Sent | Continuing Jesus' Mission in the World

## April 25: This Week Along the Way | Thessalonica



### More about Thessalonica

Thessalonica was located at the intersection of two major Roman roads, one leading from Italy eastward (Ignatia Way) and the other from the Danube to the Aegean. Thessalonica's location and use as a port made it a prominent center of trade, culture, and religion and because of this the city eventually became the capital of all of Macedonia. Thessalonica was a strategic city for Paul's missionary efforts. Since Thessalonica was such a cosmopolitan city, if the gospel could flourish there, it could flourish anywhere. And the gospel could also spread from Thessalonica on trade routes all over the Roman Empire and the world.

### Readings for the Week of April 25

**Monday** | 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

**Tuesday** | 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

**Wednesday** | 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

**Thursday** | 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

**Friday** | Acts 17:16-32

## WELCOME (15 minutes)

This week as we explore the implications of living as members of the kingdom of God concerning relationships and sex, describe briefly one close friendship you have had in your life (outside of your family). Could be anyone from a childhood friend to someone you are friends with now. What promotes closeness in your relationship?

Last week we studied about a joyful perspective in the midst of trials, struggles, and persecution. How has that message made you think or respond this last week?

## WORSHIP (20 minutes)

*This week's liturgy for worship is based on Psalm 95:6-8 and 1 Thessalonians. Feel free to speak this liturgy together to focus yourselves on God and to worship Him and then take time for pray for each other.*

"Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion when the people of God tested the Lord. Bow down in humility and worship the Lord. "

Be at peace among yourselves, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; abstain from every form of evil, hold fast to what is good, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

# Connect Groups and Spiritual Friends

WELCOME | WORSHIP | WORD | WITNESS

## WORD (40 minutes)

### Read Aloud: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

What strikes you in what the passage says?

What struck you in the sermon on this passage?

What difference does the cross make in this story?

Where does this passage apply to your life right now?

What is a faithful response to this passage this week?

## WITNESS (15 minutes)

Paul's exhortation in chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians concerning sexuality immorality exposes a clash of kingdom values, between a view of sexual practices that is either permissive or rules based and the vision of the scriptures, that speak of sex as a good gift created by a good God for flourishing in committed marriages.

Where do you see this clash of kingdoms concerning sex and what does it mean for us to promote this gospel centered understanding of sexual practices in our lives, families, and world?

How does grace change our witness concerning sexual practices?

Paul also spoke about sexual practices as a justice issue, against the exploitation and dehumanization of the most vulnerable. What is a next step for you individually or as a connect group in bringing justice and mercy to those victims of exploitation, dehumanization, injustice, or abuse?