



Daily Faith Practices

Sunday, October 16-22 (A) – 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Focus: *Work as a Labor of Love*

word of life

“We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 (NRSV)

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians is full of words of thanksgiving. The first verse gives a clue behind Paul’s attitude of thanks. Paul refers to the congregation as being *in* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a high compliment from Paul.

1. *What does it mean for a congregation to be “in” God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ?*
2. *What might cause a congregation to disconnect from God?*

Paul gives thanks for this congregation constantly for their love, faith and hope. These three attributes are frequently associated with the beloved final verse of 1 Corinthians 13, “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13 NRSV) That chapter is often read at weddings, but the context of Paul’s letter is broader than the love found in marriage. Paul writes to the congregation of Corinth to encourage them to become a healthy body of Christ marked by love.

Similarly, Paul writes to the Thessalonians, “. . . remembering before our God and Father your work of *faith* and labor of *love* and steadfastness of *hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 1:3 NRSV) This triad of attributes works together because of a rootedness *in* God.

3. *Are you familiar with the triad of: faith, hope, and love? How so?*
4. *How do faith, hope, and love interrelate? In other words, can you have one without the other? Explain your answer.*
5. *How do faith, hope, and love grow from a personal relationship with Christ?*

The witness of the Thessalonians speaks loudly. The Holy Spirit is at work, manifesting fruit-filled lives in the Thessalonians. Seeds of faith have been blessed and have grown into a mature harvest of faith, hope, and love. No wonder Paul gives thanks constantly.

A pattern of faith development can be observed. Paul imitated the Lord despite enduring hardship, persecution, and rejection. His faith in Christ was not constructed of words alone; his deep commitment to Christ was reflected in his deeds and life.

6. *How might someone imitate Christ?*
7. *What aspects of Paul are worthy to be imitated?*

The people of Thessalonica turned from worshipping idols to following Christ. They imitated Paul and Christ. Their transformation is real and deep, producing followers of Christ who are now being imitated by others.

8. *What makes the Thessalonians ready to be imitated by others?*
9. *What questions would you like to ask the Thessalonians?*

word *among us*

Sally was the spittin' image of her mother. Not only did they look alike, they acted alike. Their laughter and mannerisms were all the same.

Thus it was no surprise when Sally began to drink alcohol—*just like her mother*. At first, Sally would drink a sip, but then the drinking increased. Like her mother, Sally began to hide her drinking habits. One thing led to another. Finally, Sally's mother and father confronted Sally about her excessive drinking habits. Sally blurted out, "I am just imitating you, mom! Don't you see how much *you* drink?"

Children often follow the behavioral patterns of parents—for good or bad.

1. *Give an example of imitating your own parents.*
2. *Give an example of someone who has tried to imitate you.*

Our tendency to imitate others continues throughout life. Children imitate adults and older children. Teenagers imitate their peers. All of us can be tempted by expensive advertising campaigns to imitate celebrities by purchasing products they promote.

The bottom line—we imitate those people we admire. Sometimes the people we admire and strive to emulate become our personal mentors. When it comes to mentors in the faith, they come in all different shapes and sizes, showing up as a neighbor, colleague, or friend at church. We find ourselves wanting to be more like that person as he or she encourages and guides us to grow into our own gifts and personhood.

3. *Who has taught you how to live your faith?*
4. *Why is it important to have a Christian mentor?*

faith practice in daily life

Serve all people following the example of Jesus.

When we affirm our baptism, we make certain promises of faith. One such promise is to *serve all people following the example of Jesus*. In other words, we promise to imitate Jesus, particularly in serving others. In that promise, we align ourselves with Paul, the Thessalonians and others who follow the example of Jesus.

5. *What does it mean for you to imitate Jesus in serving all people?*

Paul writes to the Thessalonians, ". . . remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 1:3 NRSV) This triad of faith, hope, and love are fruits of a Christian worthy of imitation.

6. *How does faith shape your life?*
7. *What does the phrase "labor of love" mean?*
8. *Where in your life do you need the steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ?*

Prayer

Shape us to be imitators of you. Amen

last word

Select a Christian to imitate this week,
and do so.

