

Introduction

The Thessalonians were new Christians that needed to be helped and supported as they started their walk with Jesus. What can we say and do today to train and disciple new Christians as they start their relationship with Jesus?

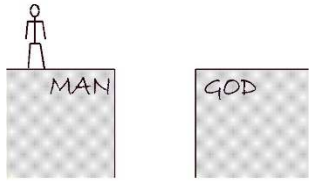
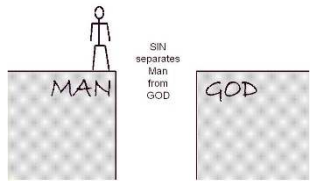
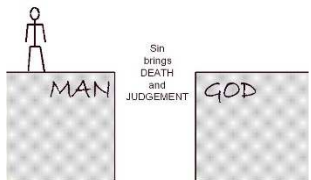
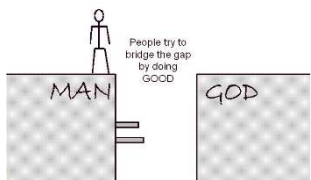
1. New Christians need to be **GROUNDING IN THEIR FAITH**

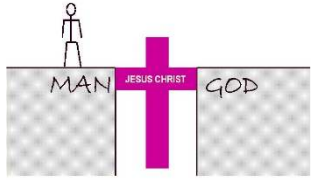
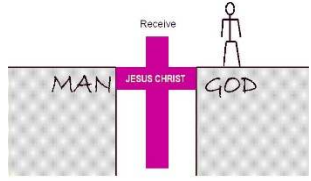
“After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you!” (1 Thessalonians 2:19 NLT).

Paul used Hope, Joy, and Crown to describe his personal thrill that the Thessalonians had become Christians. The word translated “Hope” refers to the joy and the confidence of eternal salvation through Jesus. The word “Crown” underlines that it is a gift of great honour received from God.

A good place to start with new believers is to explain how and why someone becomes a Christian. If nothing else, it will help them to be certain that they are a Christian.

There are several ways to explain the steps to salvation, e.g.:

<p>The Bible teaches that God loves everyone, and He wants all of us to know Him. God wants to have a love relationship with each one of us. But there is a problem: we are separated from God and His love.</p>	
<p>The Bible tells us that, because we have sinned against God, so we are separated from God and His love. <i>“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”</i> (Romans 3:23) Just to be clear, this is not just those we would call “bad people”. This is everyone. All of us have fallen short of God’s perfect glory and standard.</p>	
<p>This separation from God has a consequence. This separation from God leads only to death and certain judgment. <i>“Those who do not know God...will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord.”</i> (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9) This is serious. This is the consequence of not knowing God.</p>	
<p>Throughout history, people have tried in many ways to bridge this gap, between themselves and God. But <i>“your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”</i> (Isaiah 59:2) No bridge reaches God except one. There is a solution.</p>	

<p>Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins, is the <i>only</i> way to God.</p> <p><i>For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.”</i> (1 Timothy 2:5-6)</p>	
<p>All people who personally receive Jesus Christ into their lives. All people who trust Jesus to forgive their sins, because of Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary. Only those people who believe on Jesus can cross this bridge.</p> <p><i>“To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”</i> (John 1:12)</p>	

This is the confidence and certainty that we have that we are saved. In faith in Jesus, we have personally received Him into our lives. Because of what Jesus did at Calvary, the penalty for our wrongdoing has been paid and our sins are forgiven. As a result, because we believe on Jesus, we can cross the bridge and enter into an eternal love-relationship with Him.

“And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God’s Son does not have life.” (1 John 5:11-12 NLT).

2. New Christians need to be **STRENGTHENED VISIBLY**

Paul, Timothy and Silas went to Thessalonica around AD50 (Acts 17). Over a 3-week period, they preached the good news of new life in Jesus, and many people became Christians. However, the Jews in Thessalonica became jealous of the new Christians, so they formed a mob and started a riot in the city. Not surprisingly, Paul and his friends left Thessalonica. Worried about what would happen to the new church, Paul had wanted to visit the Thessalonians again, but he had been prevented from doing so.

“Finally, when we could stand it no longer, we decided to stay alone in Athens, 2 and we sent Timothy to visit you. He is our brother and God’s co-worker in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. We sent him to strengthen you, to encourage you in your faith,” (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 NLT).

Paul did two things to strengthen the new Christians in Thessalonica:

a) Paul sent a Helper.

After Paul, Timothy and Silas left Thessalonica (Acts 17), they went to Berea, where they then separated. Paul went on to Athens in the south, but Timothy & Silas stayed in Berea. Because of his concern for the Thessalonian Christians, Paul sent Timothy, his trusted co-worker back to Thessalonica – in person.

Principle: new Christians need mature Christians to be visibly alongside them – in person.

b) Paul sent a Letter.

“But now Timothy has just returned, bringing us good news about your faith and love. He reports that you always remember our visit with joy and that you want to see us as much as we want to see you.” (1 Thessalonians 3:6 NLT).

Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians in response to Timothy’s encouraging report. It was not a casual greeting, but full of deep Christian truth.

Note: Paul wrote some letters that are not part of the New Testament.

By contrast, the two letters to the church in Thessalonica are part of the Bible.

Principle: new Christians need to receive, read and study God's Word in the Bible.

"With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you both in person and by letter." (2 Thessalonians 2:15 NLT).

As Christians, we are called to visibly strengthen new Christians.

"You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others." (2 Timothy 2:2 NLT).

3. New Christians need to be **NURTURED SPIRITUALLY**

"We continue to pray night and day most earnestly that we may see you face to face, and may complete whatever may be imperfect and lacking in your faith." (1 Thessalonians 3:10 AMP).

New Christians need to be nurtured through our ongoing prayers.

a) Pray that their Faith Might Mature (v.10).

"Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith." (1 Thessalonians 3:10 NIV).

The word translated "supply" means to repair what has been broken, e.g. mending nets.

We need to pray for new Christians that they will grow in their faith, receive healing in their spiritual lives, and deepen their relationship with Jesus.

b) Pray that their Love Might Overflow (v.12).

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you." (1 Thessalonians 3:12 NIV).

When people go through difficulties, it is easy to be self-focused, self-centred, and demanding. The other approach is that times of trial draws someone even closer to Jesus. This is what Paul prayed.

Paul did not pray that the difficulties would stop for the Christians in Thessalonica. Instead, he prayed that their love for Jesus would overflow abundantly.

We need to pray for new Christians that their love for Jesus will be abundant and excellent. We should pray this prayer for ourselves as well.

c) Pray for their Holiness of Life (v.13).

"May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones." (1 Thessalonians 3:13 NIV).

We need to pray for new Christians that their character and conduct will be holy and blameless before God.

Our prayers for new Christians are equally valid prayers for each other and for ourselves. Let us pray that our Faith will Mature, our love for Jesus will Overflow, and that our lives will be Holy and honouring to God.

"be unceasing and persistent in prayer;" (1 Thessalonians 5:17 AMP).

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we are called to help and support new Christians. This should not be seen as an inconvenience but a privilege and an honour.

Let us be ready and willing to help others to be:

- Grounded in their Faith in Jesus.
- Strengthened Visibly, as we stand alongside them.
- Nurtured as we pray for one another.

AMEN