

## *Longing to Be Together*

1 Thessalonians 2.17-3.10

Slowly but surely, more and more is being revealed in 1 Thessalonians, both about the writers and the readers. We also have the privilege of learning more about the nature of our Christian faith, particularly in relationship to each other. As you study this passage, note how powerful the emotion is, making sure you detect the reasons why the writers feel so passionate about the Thessalonian believers. You will be enriched as you do!

Pastor Eric

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### **Setting the Scene**

How does knowing the backstory from Acts 17 change the way you read 1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:10? What stands out differently once you understand their sudden, forced separation?

Paul uses family imagery in 1 Thessalonians (orphans, nursing mother, guiding father). Why do you think he chooses such emotionally charged language to describe their ministry among the Thessalonians?

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### **Paul's Longing and Its Meaning**

Paul says they were “orphaned” from the Thessalonians. What does that metaphor communicate about the depth, and pain, of Christian relationships?

The text emphasizes their repeated attempts to return (“again and again”) along with an “intense longing.” What does this tell us about how Paul understands his spiritual responsibility for them?

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### **Faith That Needs Care**

What do these verses suggest about faith being something that can be strengthened, unsettled, or lacking? Why do you think Scripture is so honest about the vulnerability of faith? Which of those descriptions resonates most with your own faith right now?

How does this passage push back against ideas like “cheap grace” or faith without discipleship?

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### **Face-to-Face Matters**

Why do you think Paul insists on being “face to face” rather than relying solely on reports or letters? What is gained through embodied presence that can’t otherwise be experienced?

In your experience, how has being physically present with other believers strengthened your faith in ways digital connection could not?

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### **Mutual Dependence in the Body of Christ**

Paul sends Timothy to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonians in their faith. What are ways you can imagine he did that? Paul says he longs to “supply what is lacking” in their faith. What are some ways faith can be incomplete—not wrong, just unfinished?

Which of those roles: monitoring, encouraging, or resupplying faith, do you most need right now? What would it look like, practically, for your Life Group to help “supply what is lacking” in one another’s faith?

Who currently has permission to speak honestly into the state of your faith? If no one does, what might be preventing that?