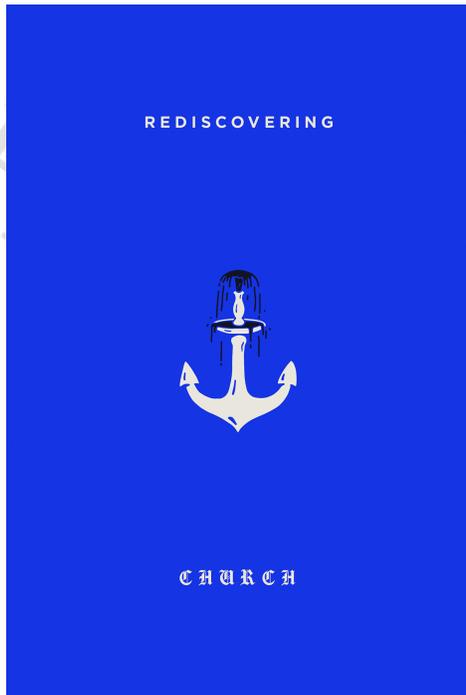


# Rediscovering Church Series Discussion Guides

## July - September 2023

### Week 1 - The Invitation



### Teaching Text

#### 1 Thessalonians 1:1-4

*Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you.*

### Sermon Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Keithen Schwahn kicked off our Summer sermon series, Rediscovering Church, a study through 1 Thessalonians, with an overview of the book and an invitation to the church. As the leader of our growing Youth and College ministries, Pastor Keithen holds a unique perspective on what is happening in the

next generation, and challenged us to rediscover the church of Jesus now, so that Gen Z can discover it for the first time.

1 Thessalonians is considered to be the first book written in the New Testament, picking up with the apostle Paul as he follows up with a highly persecuted community of believers in a hinge city of the Roman Empire, Thessalonica. The unique location, diversity of religious beliefs, and deep rooted loyalty to Rome created intense opposition to Jesus' gospel that declared Him the true King. The book of Acts tells us that Paul, Timothy, and Silas were only able to accomplish three weeks of ministry there before being driven out, and fearing for the resilience of the people who had come to believe, Paul sent Timothy back to check in on the Thessalonians. This letter is Paul's direct response to the surprising report Timothy brought back; this community was actually thriving in the midst of suffering persecution.

Paul opened by encouraging them for their work produced by faith, labor prompted by love, and endurance inspired by hope, and Pastor Keithen highlighted these as words that will have power to unlock radical faith for future generations. Work, labor, and endurance must have the right substances fueling them, or they will lead to burnout instead of fruit, but the substances of the church at Thessalonica (faith, hope, and love), must first be redefined in the way of Jesus. Faith is not a private, mental agreement, but meant to be the trust structure of our lives. Love is not the pursuit of selfish desire and pleasure, but a sacrificial commitment to elevate the good of another, even at a cost to ourselves. Hope is not wishful thinking void of certainty, but the expectation of coming good based on the character and promises of God. In other words, the model Church should contain work produced by trust in Jesus as King, labor prompted by sacrificial living, and endurance inspired by expectation of coming good as God is on the throne.

As we spend this Summer consecrating ourselves, let us also feel the responsibility of handing something off to the next generation. Pastor Keithen invited us to prepare ourselves as the bride of Christ by pursuing healing where we need it, fighting against apathy by dreaming with God, and embodying the compelling life that Jesus offers for the younger generations. He also encouraged us to seek God's heart through intercession for Gen Z and Gen Alpha, fasting in response to the decline of the Church, and surrendering our lives fully to the Lord. Let us not just rediscover church for ourselves, but for the generations to come.

## Week 2 - The Model Church



### Teaching Text

#### 1 Thessalonians 1:3-10

*We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

### Sermon Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Suzy continued our sermon series, Rediscovering Church, with an exploration of the Thessalonians as the model church: what set them apart, what

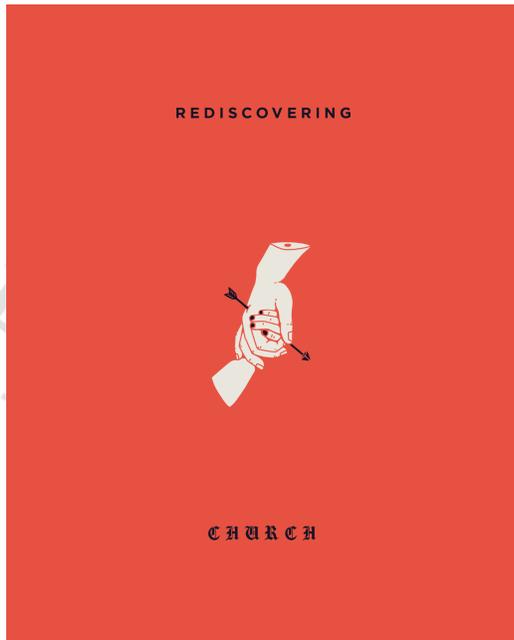
sustained them, and how we can learn from their example to bear fruit that lasts in the church today. The church in Thessalonica was unapologetically countercultural, boldly declaring their faith in Jesus in a time and place when idol worship and allegiance to Caesar were at the crux of society. As a result, they faced heavy persecution, which prompted Paul to write them letters to encourage and spur them on in their faith.

Paul describes their community as the model church by recounting evidence of their countercultural nature, and highlights the roots in their imitation of Paul and Christ. Paul understood that imitation is at the heart of discipleship, so he encouraged them to keep learning from himself and other spiritual leaders who were mimicking Christ. The Thessalonians' focus on imitating Christ helped transform them into His image rather than being overcome by worldly pressure. Paul goes on to say their church had become a model to all communities of believers. By imitating those who follow Christ, the church became impressed with Christ's image, and were living in a way that could be modeled by others.

In Paul's letter, we can identify four ways in which the church reached this point. Firstly, their work was produced by faith, their labor prompted by love, and their endurance inspired by hope in Jesus, which allowed them to bear lasting fruit. Secondly, they received the gospel not just with words but with power. This recognition allowed them to develop deep conviction that helped them withstand severe persecution. Thirdly, the church became sincere imitators of Paul and Christ, and were filled with the Holy Spirit given joy. Lastly, they turned to God from idols, and completely reoriented their lives around following Jesus and waiting for His return, despite it being a radical and costly decision.

However, the posture upheld by the Thessalonians is not always what we see in the modern church, where there is often a focus on messaging and lesser attention given to the power of God to save. As a church in a diverse and bustling city, we have influence in how the gospel is shared and lived out. It is our responsibility to present a beautiful model of following Jesus with deep, theological conviction, and to develop faith in our community that can withstand cultural pressure. We must remember that what we do and how we do it has ripple effects, and we need to ensure that it comes from a place of faith, hope, and love in Christ, if it is to produce fruit that lasts.

## Week 3 - Restoring Leadership Credibility to a Scandalized Church



### Teaching Text

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

## Sermon Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued the “Rediscovering Church” series, teaching on restoring leadership credibility to a scandalized church with 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, and laying out a guide for Godly leadership. Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians explains his motivations for teaching and leading the church amidst criticism, after he was pushed out of the city by false teachers who attacked his character and questioned his credibility and authority to lead. Like the Thessalonians, the modern church in the West is experiencing a crisis of trust and disillusionment towards leadership, fueled by cynicism and suspicion. This crisis has created tension between Christians leaving the Church for self-authority and Church leadership struggling to manage the crisis, ultimately leading to burnout.

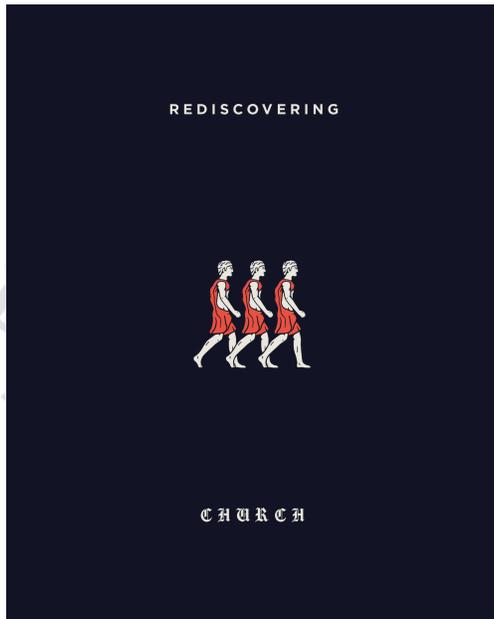
Paul offers three markers to determine sound and Godly leaders: motives, methods, and mission. First, a leader should have righteous motives that aim to please God over people, show that they are entrusted and accountable, and establish credibility in their authority. Second, instead of utilizing methods like flattery and masks driven by hunger for praise, Paul relied on exerting influence rather than wielding power. His methods focused on emphasizing relationships with the church body instead of content. He compares this relationship to parenthood, using maternal and paternal imagery, stressing that both loving comfort and loving challenge are crucial to help someone reach maturity. Lastly, Paul states that a leader’s mission should be to form people who live compelling lives, encouraging disciples to seek the Kingdom and glory God calls us to.

Many people deal with legitimate “church hurt” from the actions of leaders with poor motives, methods, and mission. However, to begin the process of rebuilding trust within the Church, we must look to Jesus as the ultimate example of leadership. His motivation was His love for us, His methods were gentle and tender, and His mission was to save humanity (John 3:16). True Kingdom leadership prioritizes God’s agenda and accountability within the church. Our church’s vision of leadership aims to reflect this - Godly influence towards God’s agenda. Most churches go wrong in leadership by enacting the Toxic Triangle (destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments). While healthy leadership actually requires Godly leaders, empowered followers, and accountable environments. Finally, leaders should seek to maintain credibility and care amidst criticism and cancellation fueled by the culture. We were created to live and prosper under authority. As leaders are called to give an

account of their work to God, we should all be Kingdom-focused disciples who seek accountability over cancel culture and offer a compelling alternative to the worldly view of leadership.

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## Week 4 - The Word of God



### Teaching Text

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

*And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last. But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.*

## Sermon Recap

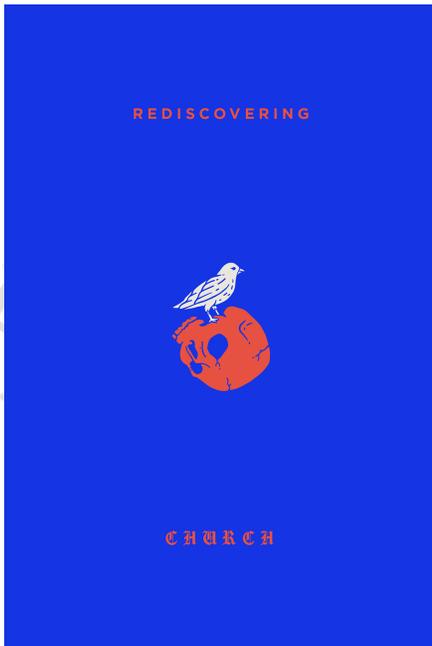
This Sunday, Pastor Suzy Continued our Rediscovering Church series with a teaching on the importance of understanding and receiving “the word of God” in all its forms. The Word of God is multifaceted; referring to an utterance of God’s Spirit to the prophets, the written records of these words, God’s Word made flesh through Jesus Christ, and the Gospel message about Jesus.

The Word of God is still going out in power today through the written word in the Bible, the embodied word in the person of Jesus, the prophetic word of the Holy Spirit communicating with believers, and the proclaimed word of the Gospel. However, this phrase, while commonly used, has become rarely understood and often mishandled in the American church. Research over the last few years has shown a significant decrease among professing Christians in the beliefs that the Bible is the written words of God, that Jesus was who He said He was, that the prophetic can be trusted, and that the Gospel is the only way to salvation. Despite holding more access to study the words of God than ever before, the modern American church has increasingly strayed away from it, leaving it outside the doors of the place it should be held in the most reverence.

We must rediscover the Word of God and put it back in its proper place within the church. We have to receive the Word of God in all of its forms (the Scriptures, Jesus, The Holy Spirit, and the Gospel) not holding it at arms length or with a distant agreement, we must accept it as divine and powerful, not as merely human, and we must allow it to work in us through faith. The Word of God is always meant to produce life, but we have to actively engage with it. To live as people marked by the words of God, we have to meditate on the written word to better understand God’s character, we have to know the embodied word, Jesus, and develop true intimacy with Him, we have to grow in discerning the prophetic word with the help of the Holy Spirit and the written word, and finally we have to proclaim the proclaimed word, the Gospel, so that others might come to know the Word.

The Word of God is living and active, God-breathed, sharper than any double-edged sword. It is time that we invite God back into our understanding of His Word and give it the rightful place of authority in our lives it was always meant to have.

## Week 5 - Strengthen & Encourage



### Teaching Text

#### 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

*So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.*

### Sermon Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Sam continued our Rediscovering Church series with a teaching on Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians about suffering well. Paul sent Timothy back to the church in Thessalonica to do two things: strengthen (establish firmly) and encourage (to come alongside and support) the community in the midst of persecution. At this time, the Thessalonians were undergoing severe suffering for their beliefs, and Paul knew the importance of having an established faith in order to endure through trials, and the same is true for us today. As we experience moments of

disappointment and doubt in seasons of suffering, grief, and pain, we must be continually rooted in Truth, and welcome the support of the Holy Spirit and community.

As Pastor Sam expanded on Paul's methods of strengthening and encouraging, he brought our attention to the end of Ephesians, where Paul reminds us that our fight is not against flesh and blood. Paul knew that before we could be strengthened to stand in the midst of suffering, we have to know what we are being strengthened against. Our true fight is not against other people, but the spiritual forces of evil at work in the world. This revelation allows us to move through seasons of pain in this life without demonizing others, no matter their participation in hurtful situations.

After we are rightly orientated in the Kingdom of Light, with an awareness of the kingdom of darkness opposing us, we can freely invite Jesus, the Suffering Servant, into our trials. Not only will He empathize with us in our darkest moments, He fights for us and strengthens us to stand. Doubt does not disqualify us from the work of the Lord, but we have to bring it to Him. Our places of greatest disappointment and pain can become our place of contending with the encouragement and support of the Holy Spirit. Let us be a people firmly established in faith that can not only suffer well, but come alongside those who are suffering around us.

## Week 6 - Letter from the Persecuted Church



### Teaching Text

#### 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

*But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 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.*

### Sermon Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Ashley continued our Rediscovering Church series with a teaching on Christian persecution and the appropriate response of the Western

Church. While it may appear that persecution is a burden of the past that only the early Church faced, the reality is that one in seven Christians today are facing persecution because of their faith. As we read about the encouragement the Church in Thessalonica provided Paul during a time of immense persecution, we can't help but wonder: Has the Western Church over personalized faith to the extent that we have traded a communal Christianity for an individualized faith? Have we become numb to the trials of our persecuted brothers and sisters in the East and the global South? 1 Corinthians 12:12 teaches us that just as the human body has many parts which make up a whole body, so it is with the body of Christ. The Western Church has an important role to play as members of Christ's body. We must rejoin the persecuted Church not just in their suffering, but also in their faith.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13, Paul mentions that the Church of Thessalonica gifted him with three things: encouragement, true life, and joy in the presence of God. This church infused Paul with courage, empowered him with fresh hope to continue to live a worthy life, and offered him inexplicable, calm delight. Similarly, perhaps the most significant thing we can do with our lives is to live a beautiful and compelling lives of faith. While those in the persecuted Church only know a life of persecution, they are looking towards the horizon where we stand. We are not meant to exalt martyrdom or persecution, but to exalt Jesus, and when we completely reorient our lives, we echo back to those suffering for their faith that Jesus is indeed worthy.

Paul prays for the Church of Thessalonica that their love would increase and their hearts would be strengthened for holiness. May our love also be so abundant that it covers even those we struggle to forgive and may we too be blameless in holiness so that we may see God. Before, we may have considered two options: to put Jesus first on a long list of priorities or to erase all other priorities but Jesus. However, we now have a third and better response: to put Jesus at the center of every priority—our friends, career, time, marriage, family, and sexuality. When Jesus is at the center of every aspect of our lives, we gain purity in heart that allows us to see Jesus as the persecuted Church sees Him. In this way, we can also respond to Him as the persecuted Church responds—with an abundance of love and hearts strengthened for holiness.

## **Guest Week: David Thomas - Sowing for an Awakening**

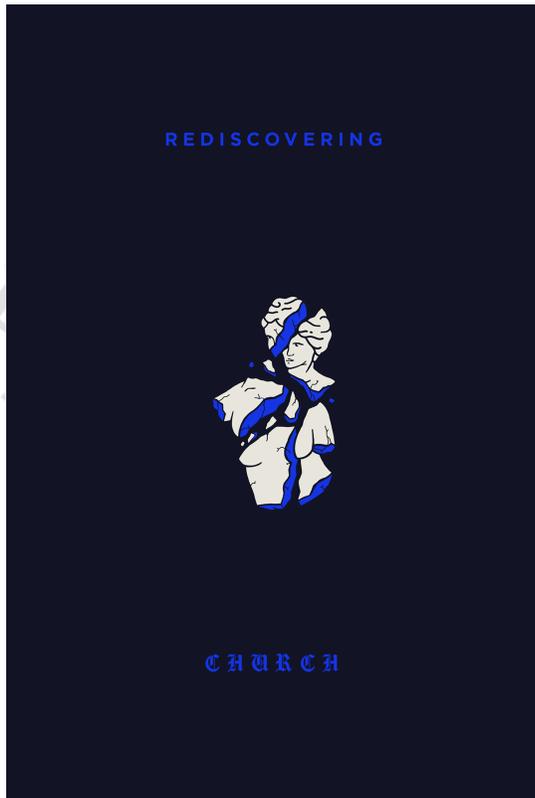
### **Sermon Recap**

This weekend, guest teacher David Thomas joined us to share a word on sowing for awakening through travailing prayer. David shares in our desire to see the fame and deeds of God renewed and known in our time, and was able to help steward the outpouring that happened earlier this year at Asbury. Experiencing this move of God first hand confirmed David's convictions that our prayer life is the most important thing about us and that we must press further into prayer as individuals and as the Church.

Travailing is the deepest heart of prayer, and we see it all throughout Scripture. From the desperate cries of the enslaved Hebrews, to the ancient prophets, to the Psalms, to Jesus in Gethsemane, to the writings of Paul, the people of the Bible are wholly unfamiliar with casual prayer. We even find potent examples of how to boldly approach God through the people that approached Jesus during His time on earth. Luke's gospel account includes the story of a father crying out in a crowd for Jesus to heal his son. He is determined to bring his urgent need before Jesus until there was full restoration spiritually, physically, and relationally, and it is this kind of persistent love that must drive our prayers. This kind of praying has been all but lost in the Western church because we are often disconnected from desperation, but the real beginnings of awakening reside in the plowed up hearts of men and women caught up in agonizing travail for the Kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in Heaven.

In the spirit of travail, "wrestling with God" in prayer is not about coming against Him, but aligning with His desires, and giving utterance to the longings of His heart. This kind of straining and persevering in prayer should purify the Church in such a way that it will be clear human excellence played no part in producing a move of God. Our cultural moment requires that we put to death anything in ourselves that could hinder awakening, and take up contending for God to come meet our world's great needs. We must resolve to cry out to the Lord as long as there is breath in our lungs, even if we never see what we are asking for. The Scriptures promise that those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy, so while we are able, let us be a people who offer our hearts up to the Father, ask Him to break them, and give them a voice.

## Week 7 - Sexual Formation in the Way of Jesus



### Teaching Text

#### 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

*As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.*

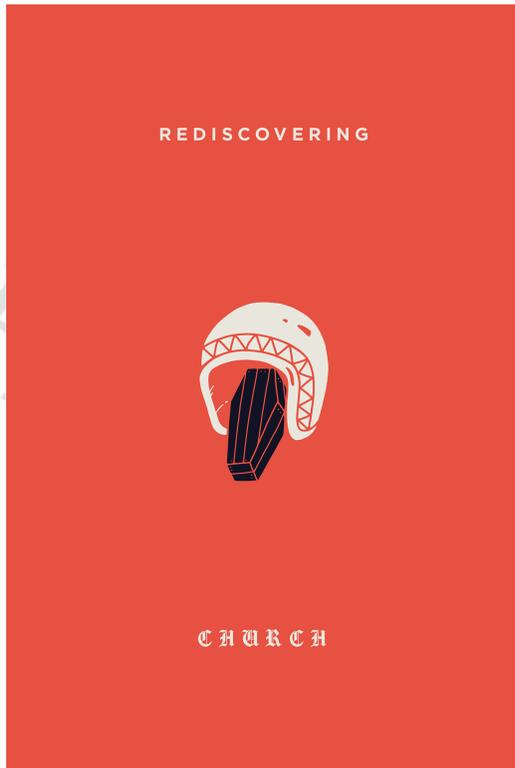
## Sermon Recap

This week, Pastor Jon continued our Rediscovering Church series with a teaching out of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 on sexual formation in the way of Jesus. In this passage, Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica to address how they should approach sexuality as God designed it while in the midst of a culture that was sexually debaucherous. Paul described a sexual formation based on relational intimacy stemming from a love for Jesus and a desire to obey His commandments, rather than the shame based control that was present in the wider culture.

Our time in history has many parallels to the one the Thessalonians found themselves in. We live in an age of authenticity: a world driven by the sovereignty of self, where sex is treated as an appetite to be satiated. However, Jesus requires submission to His authority in every area of life, including sexuality. Rather than constructing our identity around authenticity and the fulfillment of our desires, we must allow our identity to be revealed to us in Christ, and trust in God's kindness as He sets the boundaries for our sexuality and sex within the confines of marriage. Where secular sexuality is driven by power, passion, and lust, sexuality in the Kingdom of God is defined by holiness and honor. By living out Christ's commands regarding human sexuality, the Church can be a place of relief from the chaos of the world, provide safety from the predatory sexual behavior in the wider culture, and be a place to confess sin and receive mercy.

The stories that the world sells about sexuality lead to disillusionment, disappointment, and fear. They drive us into false fulfillment or cycles of shame and guilt, but God's vision for sex is one that leads to transformation and joy, and ultimately points us back to the greatest love story of all of history: the union of Christ and His Church. As followers of Jesus, we must choose to live out of this sacred story, both as individuals and as a community, and offer our world a credible and compelling alternative to human flourishing.

## Week 8 - Between the Resurrection and the Return



### Teaching Text

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

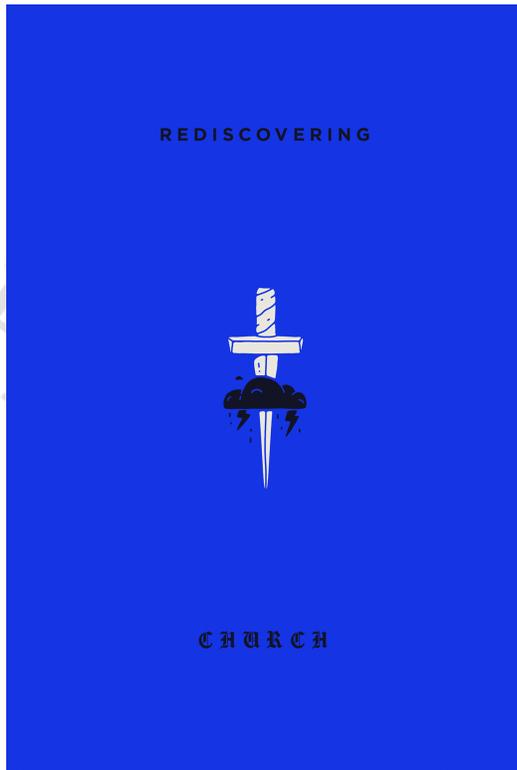
## Sermon Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Matt Ro continued our Rediscovering Church series with a teaching on how we ought to live between Jesus' resurrection and His promised return. The reality of His return is imminent, and should be both the anchor and driving force of our hope.

The resurrected Jesus is the first born of the new creation, and by God's loving design, everyone who believes in Him will be restored and raised up just as He was. The early Church lived as if Jesus was coming back soon. While it didn't happen in their lifetime, we are called to follow in their footsteps and anticipate the renewal of all creation. Our hope is not in escaping this world, but in seeing Heaven come to earth and Jesus making all things new. Interpreting our stories from the vantage point of Christ's second coming requires us to reject our human inclination to pursue peace, comfort, and security. We must conduct our lives to anticipate His return by being intensely watchful and intentionally self-controlled. The enemy is not passively trying to distract us from our great hope, so we cannot be passive either, even in our waiting. We need to actively live in close community, embrace courageous vulnerability, encourage one another, and care for each other's needs.

As followers of Jesus, we are meant to be a community marked by faith, hope, and love, that anxiously awaits His return and His Kingdom being fully realized on the earth.

## Week 9 - The Commitment



### Teaching Text

#### **1 Thessalonians 5:12- 28**

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. Brothers and sisters, pray for us. Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

## Sermon Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Sam Gibson finished out our Rediscovering Church series with a teaching from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 on Jesus and His Church. As we look to and learn from the early church, we must be careful not to elevate them above the person of Jesus. Even the church in Thessalonica, which was upheld as a model church, had leadership challenges and relational issues that Paul had to address. He closed his letter by encouraging them to keep Jesus at the center, despite the inevitable conflict. The Church throughout time has always experienced these difficult dynamics, because humans, in all of their brokenness, are involved. However, as the Bride of Christ, the Church is still called to operate in a different way.

Centering the Church on the person of Jesus and the Gospel begins by determining through discernment what people actually need, instead of just assuming what people need. When we put ourselves in the middle of what's happening in our church, we end up dethroning Jesus and His plans for His body. Pastor Sam referenced Ray Ortlund's admonishment for every member of the Church to participate in "unselfing" so the Gospel can flourish. It is only when the Church becomes less focused on itself, and more focused on Jesus, that it will become more dependent on the Holy Spirit, and increase on awareness of the Spirit's movement, or lack thereof. The Church must yield to the Holy Spirit without coming to Him with personal checklists, because authentic Christianity is ultimately a surrender to Jesus that yields the privilege of being in His presence.

The Church should first and foremost be about upholding the person of Jesus. We do not gather to study historical concepts, but rather to worship the living God. If we get so wrapped up in having correct beliefs that we forget to behold Jesus, we've missed it all. The greatest question we can answer is this: are we in love with Jesus? Secondly, the Church must remember the reality of eternity. In the Western world, our inability to consider eternal life is one of our greatest weaknesses. According to C.S. Lewis, those who do the most for our present world are those who think the most of the next. We gather to remind ourselves of the eternal weight and calling we have. Lastly, the Church must commit to doing everything together. We cannot run from church to church in search of the perfect one, for we will miss true community and our own sanctification. Instead, we must gather as the Body to exalt Jesus in the present, establish His Kingdom where we are, and look together toward our eternal future.