

## What Kind of Members Does This Church Need?

1 Thessalonians 1: 4 – 10

October 11, 2009

Last Sunday we looked at four needs people have that the church ought to strive to meet: 1) someone to pray for me 2) somewhere I can feed on God's Word and thus grow in faith 3) someone to love me unconditionally 4) people who speak of hope.

Today it is appropriate to turn over the coin, and ask, "What kind of member does this church – or any church – need?" Yes, that is a valid question. It is a question that should trigger each of us to ask the same question the disciple asked Jesus when He announced His betrayer was sitting at the table with Him that night, "Lord, is it I? Am I the kind of member who is valuable to the life and ministries of this church?"

Turn with me in your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 1: 4 – 10 (read). Here are four characteristics of such church members:

### **1. It needs church members who have been changed (1 Thessalonians 1: 4 – 5).**

A. The church needs to show the world the power of God; the most obvious way to do that is to have members who have been changed.

B. Certainly, Paul was Exhibit #1 of a changed man. He had been transformed from a killer to a preacher; from a bigot to a promoter of reconciliation.

1. When he experienced the power of God on the Damascus Road, the change became quickly evident.

2. No longer was he inflicting pain, but he was experiencing pain for the Gospel.

C. The church at Thessalonika was made up of changed people..

1. Soon they would feel the weight of persecution by the prevailing powers.

2. Normally, they would have scattered and the church dissolved, but they hung together in unity against the persecution.

D. FBC Malabar needs changed people. How are we going to show the world the power of God if we are not ourselves changed people?

#### **1. 2 Corinthians 5: 17**

2. Someone who was on the wrong path suddenly turns their life around – that shows the power of God.

3. Someone who has wasted years on drugs suddenly turns the corner and gets on a new path – that shows the power of God.

### **2. It needs its members to live out their faith where they are planted (vs. 6 – 7).**

A. The primary mission of the church is to proclaim the Gospel to the world; therefore it needs its members to live out their faith where they live.

1. The church has too many members who practice their faith only within the walls of the church house – in that context you would think they are outstanding Christians.

2. But elsewhere their life tells a totally different story.

B. The real witness to the Gospel, and the real proof of my Christian faith, is how I respond when I am put to a test.

1. Paul says the church at Thessalonika was under “severe suffering,” but they didn’t wilt under the pressure.

2. Instead they were blossoming – full of joy, as fantastic as it sounds. One moment they are full of suffering, the next they are bursting out with joy.

3. One can imagine the Thessalonian church was getting a reputation in their city as a ambassadors of Christ because of their infectious joy.

C. How do you handle the challenges in your life?

1. Your co-workers are watching; your neighbors are watching; your fellow students are watching how well you respond to difficulty.

2. You are the Gospel’s object lesson to them, and if you don’t handle problems well, it tells them that be a Christian doesn’t mean anything more than cheap talk.

3. But if you shine with joy through the hard times, they start to believe there must be something to this Christian life.

D. The church has a message it needs to get out to the world, and it needs you to be the messenger who carries it to those who need to receive it.

### **3. It needs its members to be obedient to God (v. 9).**

A. God has a reasonable expectation for His Church to be holy, and the only way we can accomplish that is to be obedient to the Lord.

1. Remember Jesus entering the Temple, and overturning the tables of the money changers and saying, “My house is a house of prayer, but you have turned it into a den of thieves.” What He was saying is that sometimes people – even well-meaning, sincere people – let too much of the world’s values and methods creep into the church, and so they fail to keep the church a place of the presence of the Holy God.

B. The church at Thessalonika were serving God, being obedient as best they could, and in so doing they realized there was a corrupting presence in the church.

1. In order to keep the church holy, they needed to expel the unholy influence from the church. They kicked out the pagan idols, and prohibited the worship of them.

C. What are some of the things we need to kick out of our church? Yes, they are likely different things from the First Century church, but they are just as dangerous and threatening:

1. Gossiping about one another;

2. The harboring of grudges;

3. Lazy attitudes toward our participation.

D. How do we solve the problem? It’s simple; begin being obedient to God!

### **4. It needs its members to be hopeful (v. 10).**

A. The world is desperate for hope; the world was created to embody hope; the working model of the hope found only in God’s grace is the individual Christian; therefore the church needs each of us to communicate the hope we have found in Christ.

B. The church at Thessalonika had hope that Jesus, Who was raised from the dead, would rescue His children before the coming of the wrath of God.

1. Even in the midst of heavy persecution, they held onto hope, because they believed the promise of God that His children would not stand in the final judgement day.
  2. And they offered that hope to their pagan world.
- C. The only people who can genuinely offer hope are hopeful people.
1. And the only place you can be sure of finding hopeful people is in the church.

Today, on our 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it's time for a check up as a church body. Are we meeting the mission god has given us as a church, the same mission He gives every church He establishes in countless places. That mission is to proclaim the Gospel where we have been planted, and the means by which we proclaim the Gospel are the same: changed church members demonstrating the power of God; who live out their faith where they live; who are obedient to their God; and who live with hope.

That is our challenge today, the same challenge our predecessors accepted 38 years ago. Are you the kind of church member this church needs to carry out its mission?

Let's pray!