

1 Thess. 1:7-10

Evidences of a church that loves Jesus

A church so full of faith, full of love, full of caring for each other – a church full of God that word of it reaches the ears of people who live miles away. That is the power of what genuine faith in Christ can do. Imagine running into someone in Morrinsville, or Whangarei or Dunedin, or Stewart Island and they say to you we know about your church, we know about your faith!

You're going to see today a church that God put on the map. God did! Not because of their smart strategies, flash lights, buildings, massive bands and rock star singers and preachers, but because of the way they turned to God, and left everything about the old life behind them. The way they committed their lives to following and loving Christ and living out the word of God. That rang out everywhere. Paul says they were an example.

These were brand new genuinely converted Christians, who had spiritual backbone. *They were tough. Resilient!* And it showed!!

O these verses we are looking at today are so powerful. So full of encouragement, and every time I read them, I know, there are so many things in my life that have to drop away. Because I no longer want to say I love him, while other 'things' compete for the love and affection that are only truly reserved for Christ. This letter teaches us, Jesus, is to have our FULL love and affection.

(READ) ⁷ As a result, you have become an example to all the believers in Greece—throughout both Macedonia and Achaia.⁸ And now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Macedonia and Achaia, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God.

We don't need to tell them about it, ⁹ for they keep talking about the wonderful welcome you gave us and how you turned away from idols to serve the living and true God. ¹⁰ And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God's Son from heaven—Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment.

Thank you Lord for this amazing passage of scripture. We're talking about a Church that loves Jesus. From this passage I see several evidences they were *precisely that*. The first being, they were an example.

An Example of how to love Jesus.

1 Thess. 1:7 As a result, you have become an example to all the believers in Greece—throughout both Macedonia and Achaia.

Not Jesus being the example. The church. They were the example! The Greek word is *Tupos* – when a hammer misses the nail and you hit the timber instead it creates a mark/indent/an impression. That's *Tupos*. That is what this church was to the world around them.

Why does Paul to call this church an example? This church was the *only church* Paul called an example. He called them that because despite having every reason *not to* – namely the type of city Thessalonica was, and the backlash they would receive – they committed their lives to Jesus. Radically! Publically. At great cost!

2 Thess. 1:4 *We proudly tell God's other churches about your endurance and faithfulness in all the persecutions and hardships you are suffering.*

What produced this commitment, this example? Look at Vv. 2-6.

- V.3 *"your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of...Jesus..."*
- V.5 *"the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true"*
- V.6 *"you received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit in spite of severe suffering"*
- V.6 *"you imitated both us and the Lord"*

And notice the pronouns – Pauls not singling out gifted individuals, no this is the whole church. Everyone! Their love for Jesus was evident in what they said, in the way they lived, in their love, their faith, and their purity. The Thessalonians were an example of how to love Jesus.

Because they were a community that exemplified how to love Jesus, they didn't need constant urging to serve...to pray, no arm twisting to gather, to read the Word, to pastorally care for each other...**IT JUST HAPPENED!**

I have been very convicted by this passage. Over many years of ministry, I've worked on strategies and methods as if 'they' are the thing that creates impact. But note this: Paul doesn't give this church a gold star for how smart they were, how well they did church services, or how good their music was. It was *simply*, their love for Christ and for each other and their willingness to suffer with joy: that was the example. **So simple, but very hard to apply.**

Nowhere does the bible tell us, the priority of the Christian walk is to do more and work harder for God because that's what successful church looks like. Nowhere does it say to grow the church is 100% our responsibility. It's, love him. Trust him. Have faith in him.

There is a clear separation between who we were and who we are now. So that even when other Christians look at your life, they want what you have. More importantly, so that when unbelievers look at you they want to know the Jesus you love¹.

D. L. Moody. *"Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining - they just shine."*²

When Karyn and I had a study break a few weeks back we crammed an 8 week *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* course into 8 days. It was a very intensive and powerful time. As a result, we have made considerable changes to our spiritual practices. **We realise our work is only as good as the genuineness of our heart for God.**

One of the things that impacted me most was the need for me to let God do his work in me, so I can be the light in the world that Jesus has called me to be. What convicted me more than anything is that I/we as Jesus followers are to look, live and behave, distinctly and differently than every person who is not a Jesus follower. **Christians are not called to blend in!**

¹ If you know of someone concerned about their faith and salvation - Thessalonians are your letters. If ever a church was in trouble, were journeying through a difficult season over leadership, a moral issue and wanted guidelines of how to get back on track, the example of the church at Thessalonica is who you look to, to help resolve and reconcile those issues.

² [Lighthouses do not ring bells | Friends of Silence](#)

You'll recall how he encouraged Timothy (1 Tim. 4:12) *Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.*

So Paul's sitting there writing this letter, he knows the city, the culture, he thinks this is absolutely amazing, he knows of no other church he planted having this kind of outreaching affect, and he says' *"guys you're doing it. And its powerful!"*

In what ways are we an example? What do we need to do to be this kind of church?

This morning, see the heart of this church, and be inspired. Catch the fire of their faith³.

The 2nd evidence they were a church that loved Jesus was **their ...Witness of The Word**

[8] *And now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Macedonia and Achaia, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God.*

If all this can happen there, it can happen here. *True?* This church was so impacted by the Word – the gospel – that they were genuinely converted by that Word. And they so loved the word that it was evidenced in how they *lived it and proclaimed it.*

And the impact of their living it and proclaiming it, RANG OUT, *"everywhere"* To the extent, that wherever Paul, Silas and Timothy went, the word and this churches love for the word had gone before them. *"...wherever we go (Paul says) we find people telling us about your faith in God"*

To give you a sense of scale: when Paul says *"throughout and beyond Macedonia and Achaia...and people everywhere"*⁴, that is an area of roughly 115,000 kms², about the size of the North Island of NZ^{2 5}

Picture Paul walking toward Corinth (about 500 kms away from Thessalonica) stopping on the side of the road to speak to someone about Jesus – and they cut him off, *"Oh no, we already know about Jesus. We know about those people up in Thessalonica who completely changed their lives around"*

Paul says *"...wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God. **We don't need to tell them about it...**"*

This church was a witness of God's word, because of the way they lived Gods word. So much so Paul says it was **ringing out from you to people everywhere...**

What's this business of ringing out? The Greek means loud. Reverberating. Audible. But this wasn't by renting massive stadiums or city-wide crusades, gospel campaigns or leaflet drops? No. Absolutely NOT knocking these. Ringing-out-faith was this church simply (and intensionally) telling

³ The Hasidic rabbi, Zuscha, was asked on his deathbed what he thought the kingdom of God would be like. He replied, "I don't know. But one thing I do know. When I get there I am not going to be asked, 'Why weren't you Moses? Why weren't you David?' I am only going to be asked, 'Why weren't you Zuscha? Why weren't you fully you?'" Alan Loy McGinnis ([TOP 25 RABBI QUOTES \(of 128\) | A-Z Quotes](#) 8/6/2026)

⁴ Imagine Paul walking the entire length of the North Island, from the top of Northland down to the coast of Wellington. But instead of open farmland, imagine that entire area packed with dozens of crowded, multi-cultural cities like Auckland and Wellington, all connected by footpaths and stone Roman roads. That is the footprint of Pauls ministry.

⁵ Two to three weeks of steady walking

neighbours, friends, anyone what Jesus had done for them, probably through a network of growing Home Groups, sharing the good news.

And those people seeing in them, the change was real. No fanfare. Simple obedience. And the impact was massive, the gospel spreading through the entire Roman Empire. It was obvious and undeniably the Spirit of God at work.

There's a lot to be said about sharing Jesus intentionally. But what about the kind of impact we can have simply **by being Christians** who *love Gods word* and *live Gods word*. Both go together. If we're not living Gods word we don't love it, and if we love God we love his word.

As John Stott rightly notes, *"No church can spread the gospel with any degree of integrity, let alone credibility, unless it has been visibly changed by the gospel it preaches"*⁶

Are more churches needed today? Do we need more sophisticated strategies, clever marketing techniques to reach people?

Or, do we need more churches that have hearts that burn for the lost, and are willing to be witnesses of the word both in how we *love Gods word* and *live Gods word*?

You are writing a Gospel, a chapter each day, by the deeds that you do and the words that you say. Men read what you write, whether faithful or true: say, what is the Gospel according to you? – Paul Gilbert⁷

Are we a community that bears witness to Gods word?

...the 3rd evidence the Thessalonians were a church that loved Jesus was owing to their...

Spiritual Integrity/Character

(v.9) ...they keep talking about the wonderful welcome you gave us and how you turned away from idols to serve the living and true God.

Here we dig down into why this church was such a powerful example: **the walk, matched the talk**. There was consistency between how they spoke of transformation and how life was actually transformed.

In his book *I Surrender*, Patrick Morley writes that the church's integrity problem is in the misconception *"that we can add Christ to our lives, but not subtract sin. It is a change in belief without a change in behaviour."*⁸

Christ changes everything about our lives when we become Christians.

Spiritual *integrity* is to do with our faithfulness. Our holiness. Our love and affections for each other. The genuineness of our conversion and repentance, and our commitment to all things Christ.

Two things stand out in v.9.

#1 there was a Turning To God

It may sound like the Thessalonians turned from idols and then found Christ. It was in fact the other way around. They turned to God – and in so doing their eyes of faith were opened. The truth of the cross was so

⁶ The "word..." today, still has inherent power. Power to accomplish God's purposes. It does not return to him void. In other words, it ALWAYS does something, because it's the word of the Lord. Ps. 33:4 *...the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything he does.*

⁷ Quote by Paul Gilbert: *"You are writing a Gospel, A chapter each day, ..."*

⁸ https://www.preceptaustin.org/1_Thessalonians_18-10#af

compelling, and Gods love so real, they literally dropped their now-unsatisfying, worthless, powerless idols. They saw those idols could never do or give them what Christ does.

This is what genuine *conversion* and *repentance* does. It is NOT first a turning away – it is a turning to God, *then*, away from the old life, old habits, old loves. It is what happens in the act of coming to faith in Jesus, *and* is what happens every day as we follow Jesus.⁹

#2 they turned away From Idols

In the 1st century this meant shrines, statues, and objects they hoped would give them success and happiness in life. Idol worship isn't just a 1st century church issue. I've seen this first-hand in Asian countries. I've stood and watched as people leave food, give money, bow down. It was hugely troubling to think these dear folk were looking for answers, provision and security at those lifeless things.

Today, it's the idols of appearance, possessions, entertainment, money, sexuality, recreation and comfort.

How do any of us know an idol has presence in our lives? We love it, or them more than Jesus. We love it more than the Bible. More than prayer. More than fellowship with believers. An idol is what (or whom) we give more trust and affection to, and place more confidence in, than God himself. An idol is what we **give priority to** over God.

1 John 5:21 *Dear children, keep away **from anything** that might take God's place in your hearts.*

This church was ruthless and radical about dethroning any and all idols in their lives, because they understood that was the kind of counter-culture commitment needed to be fully devoted followers of Jesus. If we are praying for growth, for a revival, folks, the hard reality is it starts here. With us. Ruthlessly and radically giving priority back to God. Dethroning *anything that might take God's place in our hearts*¹⁰.

Is our love and affection for God greater than anything else present in our lives? What must we do to give our whole self to serving the one true God?

...the final evidence the Thessalonians were a church that loved Jesus was owing to their **Anticipation of Jesus' Return**

v.10 *And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God's Son from heaven – Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment.*

I hope we come to v.10 in worship and gratitude to God. Why? Did you hear the last part? *He is the one who has rescued us...* God has literally put his hand on you snatched you out of your old life, given you new life, now and for all eternity. He has absorbed the judgement *you were owed* because Christ took that on himself, at the cross, in your place, for you. I'll take **(name's)** judgement...!

⁹ That turn was not just about leaving something behind; it was about moving toward Someone greater.

¹⁰ 2 Chron. 29:5, 16 "He said to them: 'Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the Lord, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary'.... The priests went into the sanctuary of the Lord to purify it. They brought out to the courtyard of the Lord's temple everything unclean that they found in the temple of the Lord." Gal. 4:8-9 *Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world?*

The Thessalonian believers clung onto their longing for Jesus's return, because the inevitability of God's rescue was their ultimate source of hope and comfort while they suffered, for the gospel. They knew they were **SAFE! SAFE!**¹¹

That anticipation changed how they lived in the present. That anticipation gave them freedom to risk everything – they had nothing to lose and everything to gain. They lived for Christ's return.

That's all true, for you. And, you can look forward to *the day* because – 1 Cor. 15: 43 – *Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength.* And from Phil. 3 *He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own... HEALED!*

The return of Jesus was/is the main event, because it means finally being home, rescued, safe and healed and with the Lord forever (1 Thess. 4:17). Let this stir us in worship and gratitude to God.

The Thessalonians were a church that loved Jesus. They were an example. A witness of the word. They had spiritual integrity. And they lived in anticipation of Jesus' return. The Thessalonians left behind what was empty and temporary so they could serve WHO was real and lasting. Meaning, their love for Jesus rang out, for miles around. People saw that Jesus was real in them.

What's true then can be true today. **“God, may FBC be a church that loves Jesus”** How? It's all here (*bible*). Choose today whom you will love and serve. It might just be today, or tomorrow, or this week Jesus comes to snatch you up!

¹¹ Rom. 8:1 “...there is **no condemnation** for those who belong to Christ Jesus”