



Sermon Discussion Guide for Groups

A Life That Matters

Preached by Jon Egan

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Summary

Have someone in your group read the following summary aloud.

In this sermon from 1 Thessalonians 2, Pastor Jon walks through what he calls a 'gospel life,' drawing from the Apostle Paul's deep love for the church at Thessalonica. Paul wrote this letter out of relief after learning that the persecuted believers were still standing strong in their faith. Using Paul's example, Pastor Jon outlines three defining marks of a gospel life: a life that has been tested, a life that is given away, and a life whose greatest treasure is people. He reminds us that being tested is not a sign of failure but a mark of dependence on God, and that those who have walked through the fire carry a unique authority and compassion.

The sermon challenges us to go beyond simply sharing the gospel message and to give our lives as the embodiment of that message. Through stories of Father Damien, Jim Elliot's wife Elizabeth, and members of the New Life congregation itself, the pastor illustrates what it looks like to 'not rotate out' of difficult, costly commitments to others. He closes by pointing to Paul's declaration that the

people themselves are his glory and joy, urging us to measure our lives not by accomplishments or recognition, but by the depth of love we pour into the people around us. He points to Jesus as the perfect model of all three: tested, given away, and whose treasure is us.

Key Passages

- 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2
- 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8
- 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20
- Romans 8:17
- Philippians 3:10
- Hebrews 12:2

Opening Prayer

Open your session in prayer, using the words below or your own

Heavenly Father, we come before You with open hands and open hearts. Thank You for gathering us together today as Your family. As we open Your Word and discuss what it means to live a gospel life, we ask that You quiet the noise in our minds and soften any hardness in our hearts. Holy Spirit, lead this conversation. Show each of us what You specifically want us to receive today, whether it is comfort in our testing, a call to give more of ourselves, or a fresh vision for the people You have placed in our lives. We do not want to simply hear a good message. We want to be changed by Your presence. Have Your way in us today. In Jesus' name, **Amen**.

Getting Going

Allow time for each member to answer the following questions before moving on.

What is a simple thing someone did for you at some point in your life that made you feel genuinely cared for, even if it seemed small to them?

Discussion Questions

Answer as many of these questions as time and interest allow.

1. Pastor Jon described a 'gospel life' as one that has been tested, given away, and that treasures people. Which of these resonates most with where you are in life right now, and why?
2. The sermon used the image of 'limping' to describe people who have been through hardship and now depend fully on God. Can you think of a time when a season of testing drew you closer to God or gave you a deeper compassion for others?
3. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 that he shared not only the gospel but his life intimately with the people he loved. What is the difference between sharing a message and sharing your life? What does that look like practically in your relationships?

4. Pastor Jon referenced the concept of 'rupture and repair' in relationships, noting that humility and honest apology can actually strengthen trust more than if the offense had never happened. How does this challenge the way you handle conflict or mistakes in your closest relationships?
5. Several stories were shared of people who chose not to 'rotate out' of difficult, costly commitments to others. Is there a situation in your own life right now where you feel tempted to pull back or disengage from someone who needs you? What is holding you back from staying in?
6. The sermon pointed out that we often sacrifice people in order to gain glory or approval from people. Where do you see this tension most in your own life, whether at work, on social media, or in your personal ambitions?
7. Paul declares in verse 19 that the people of Thessalonica are his glory and his joy. If someone asked you what your greatest treasure or crown is, what would your answer be and does it reflect what you want it to be?
8. Pastor Jon described a funeral exercise where he imagined what people would say about him and realized none of it was about accomplishments but about love. If you were to do that same exercise today, what do you think people would say, and what would you want them to say?

Making It Personal

Take the opportunity noted below to apply this week's sermon to your everyday life.

This week, identify one person in your life who needs more of you, not just your words or advice, but your actual presence and time. Make a specific plan to show up for that person in a tangible way. It could be a phone call, a visit, a meal, or simply sitting with them in a hard moment. As you do it, ask God to help you see that person the way Paul saw the Thessalonians: as your glory and your joy. Come back to your group next week ready to share what happened.

Key Takeaways

Commit to memory one point from the message before dismissing.

- A gospel life is one that has been tested. Hardship and suffering are not signs of failure but opportunities to depend fully on God, and that dependence produces authority, compassion, and a faith that others can trust.
- A gospel life is one that is given away. Paul did not just preach the gospel. He gave his very life alongside the message. We are called to embody what we believe, and a humble, honest life that owns its mistakes is more powerful than a perfect performance.
- A gospel life treasures people above accomplishments. At the end of our lives, what we will point to with the greatest joy is not what we built or achieved, but the people we loved well and invested in deeply.

- Jesus is the ultimate model of the gospel life. He was tested and suffered, He gave Himself completely as both the messenger and the message, and we are the joy set before Him for which He endured the cross.
- Choosing not to 'rotate out' of difficult commitments to people is one of the most powerful ways we reflect the love of Christ to a watching world.

Closing Prayer

Have someone from your group close your time in prayer, using the words below or your own.

Lord Jesus, thank You for this time together. Thank You that You did not just send us a message from a distance but that You came, You suffered, You gave Yourself completely, and You counted us as Your greatest joy. We confess that we often measure our lives by the wrong things, and we ask You to reorient our hearts toward what truly matters: the people You have placed in front of us. Give us the courage to stay when it would be easier to walk away. Give us the humility to own our mistakes and repair what has been broken. And in the seasons where we are being tested, remind us that You are working something in us that cannot be built any other way. May we leave here today not just having heard a good message, but as people who are becoming the message. We love You, and we trust You. In Your mighty name, **Amen**.