

SAMPLE



# children *of the* DAY

*1 & 2  
Thessalonians*

BETH MOORE

 LifeWay  
Biblical Solutions for Life



*The Holy spirit shines bright through you.*

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# *Dedication*

To the church in Thessaloniki:

Alive.

Awake.

And beautiful.

Every step of this journey bears sand from your shores.

May the fresh breezes of the Holy Spirit among you  
stir into gales of great revival in Greece.

You were marked on the map for faith  
the day a man named Paul  
swept through your gates with the gospel of Jesus Christ.  
Rise up from the ruins, resurrected and radiant.

You marked my heart forever,

Beth

Ἰωάννης 1:4 Μέσα του ήταν ζωή και η ζωή αυτή ήταν το φως των ανθρώπων

LOOK AROUND...

Explore this sample taken from the first week of *Children of the Day*.  
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# About the Author



**BETH MOORE** has written best-selling Bible studies on the patriarchs, Esther, Moses, Paul, Isaiah, Daniel, John, David, Jesus, and James. *Breaking Free*, *Praying God's Word*, and *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things* have all focused on the battle Satan is waging against Christians. *Believing God*, *Loving Well*, and *Living Beyond Yourself* have focused on how Christians can live triumphantly in today's world. *Stepping Up* explores worship and invites us to reach a new level of relationship and intimacy with God.

Beth and her husband, Keith, are devoted to the local church and have the privilege of attending Bayou City Fellowship in Houston, Texas, where their son-in-law Curtis Jones pastors. Beth believes that her calling is Bible literacy: guiding believers to love and live God's Word. Beth has a passion for Christ, a passion for Bible study, and a passion to see Christians living the lives Christ intended.

Beth loves the Lord, loves to laugh, and loves to be with His people. Her life is full of activity, but one commitment remains constant: counting all things but loss for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus, the Lord (see Phil. 3:8).

# About the Study

**CHILDREN OF THE DAY** is designed for both interactive personal study and group discussion. Here are a few suggestions for making your time with the study more meaningful.

First, to enhance your learning and application of Scripture, the study is written in an interactive format. I encourage you to complete all of the written work in your workbook. This isn't just fill-in-the-blanks. The interactive questions represent the very places where we'd look together in Scripture as we shared a cup of French roast coffee together. Please don't let the word "homework" scare you. The Holy Spirit uses your efforts as you respond to the activities in your own words.

Second, to enhance your group time together, you'll find five Principal Questions and five Personal Discussion Questions each week. The Principal Questions alert you to look for information as you study and prepare for group discussion. They are marked with a solid dot like this:

- This is a Principal Question. "Principal" means "of chief importance."

Your small group will likely discuss the Principal Questions when you meet each week. In addition to the Principal Questions, you will find Personal Discussion segments identified by a circle like this:

- This is a Personal Discussion Question designed for personal sharing.

These learning activities help you personally apply the material by relating the events to your own life. They give your group a core of shared items to discuss. Your small group will allow time for you to share your personal discussion responses, but you will not be required to share unless you so desire.

As an aid to group discussion the Principal and Personal Discussion Questions appear on the viewer guide pages along with the page numbers of the questions in the text. For the sake of space, the questions on the viewer guide pages may be less detailed. They are intended to remind you of the questions you completed during the previous week.

Oh, how I wish I could be personally present with you each week in your personal study time and in your group time. This interactive format provides the most personal contact possible until the time we can share that cup of coffee. Then I'll look forward to listening to you as you have graciously listened to me through all these studies. I pray that you will gain as much from this journey as I have. Thank you for the privilege to serve you.

This may be our first series together and, if so, I pray with all of my heart that this in-depth study and others like it will fan a lifelong flame in your heart for God's Word. Perhaps we've studied together before and, if so, I'm thrilled to tell you that this one earned its own place in my heart. Each series from *A Woman's Heart: God's Dwelling*

*Place* to this one has been used by God to accomplish a distinctive and lasting work in me. The mention of each name stirs up the remembrance of that prevailing revelation.

I won't tell you in advance what God worked in my life through this journey, because the fun of it for me is to process the material along the way with you. When I penned week 1, day 1, for instance, I had no clearer idea where we were headed than you do now. When you get to difficult material, you will see that I am struggling through it too. When you're convicted, you can know that my stomach is turning upside down as well. I love the uncertainty of what's ahead as long as I'm in the security of God's hands. It's like driving a winding highway in a convertible for the very first time. I want to feel the wind in my face. If you do too, we're going to make good traveling partners.

This time God placed on my heart the idea of offering you options. Goodness knows we need a few of those amid frantic schedules and demanding roles.

You get to choose your own level of participation.

### **LEVEL 1:** *Participate in the video sessions only.*

Through the years I've watched women drop out of weekly Bible study because they couldn't keep up with the homework. Don't think for a moment that if you can't do all of it, you're better off doing none of it. A shorter time in Scripture is far better than none at all. Watch the video sessions even if you can't get your homework assignments accomplished. You have LifeWay's blessing to copy the viewer guides for this purpose.

### **LEVEL 2:** *Participate in the video sessions + do the weekly homework assignments.*

Moving up to level 2 in which you meet with God on the pages of Scripture numerous times each week exponentially increases your experience. When you turn the last page, you will truly know the Letters to the Thessalonians and the important circumstances surrounding these first books of the New Testament. If you've got the stamina to do the homework (and you do!), you've got it in you to view the sessions. Keep in mind that many of the larger themes are addressed in the sessions, so try your hardest to view the coinciding ones at the end of each week of homework.

### **LEVEL 3:** *Participate in the video sessions + do the weekly homework assignments + handwrite the two books to the Thessalonians.*

I'm really excited about this level! For only the second time in my nearly 20 years of writing Bible studies, we've arrived at books of the Bible short enough to invite this exercise. During the first session of this series, we'll get acquainted with the circumstances that inspired the writing. Then in sessions 2 through 9, and the corresponding weeks of homework, we'll study one chapter per week. Each time we come to a new segment of the letters, I will ask you to read it then handwrite it in the back of your member book on pages designed for this exercise. If you don't choose level 3, you'll simply read the portion—without a hint of self-condemnation, I pray. This option is simply available for those who want to take the next step to retain what they're learning.



**LEVEL 4: Participate in the video sessions**

- + do the weekly homework assignments
- + *handwrite the two books to the Thessalonians*
- + *memorize the books.*

Trying to picture some of your faces almost has me tickled. But don't blame me. Remember all those women who kept asking for more? Blame them. Beloved, if you commit to all four of these levels, the Letters to the Thessalonians will live in the marrow of your bones—probably for the rest of your life. You'll find a short tutorial in the DVD bonus material that may help you if you're interested in this level.

Needless to say, we're not recommending that anyone try to memorize both books in the nine short weeks of this series. In the tutorial, I suggest a chapter a month for a total of eight months, but the best recommendation is whatever works. Since this time we're studying two short books, you might even memorize just the first. If you do, I think you'll be so hooked you'll have to go on to the second.

Because God led me to take this challenge, in the process of writing this study I've recited the eight chapters aloud more times than I can count. The exercise continues to bless me beyond what I could have imagined. Think about it! Pray about it! Then, some of you, do it!

OK, Sister, which level seems the most doable for you right now?

1      2      3      4

I'm asking you up front because I'd like to challenge you to go one level above what seems reasonably attainable. If you're willing, stretch yourself one more level! If you're pretty sure you can reach level 1, try stretching yourself into level 2 and see what happens. All you overachievers, keep in mind that higher levels and harder work won't make God love you any more than He already does. Nor will memorizing the two whole books make us superior to someone else who can barely manage a few sessions. We are secure in Christ and acceptable to God through Him.

We have nothing to lose here but much Scripture to gain if we're game for a challenge. Do only what blesses and not what burdens.

I'd like to say one last thing to you. I believe in experiences like this. I believe in Bible studies and God-centered books. I believe He can use them to change your life. A subject doesn't have to be new; it just has to speak to the predicament you're in right now.

# Introduction

May I pull back the curtain about publishing here for a minute? You've heard of the little boy who was an excellent archer and always hit his target. But his mother watched as he first shot his arrow, then drew a target around where the arrow landed. Publishing is a bit like that. First you write the book. Then you write the introduction telling where the book is headed. It just works better that way. Makes it look like you knew it all along.

Well, in this case I've reversed the order. Here is a note I wrote expressing my heart on the way to Greece at the very beginning of this journey. It matches my reality just a bit. You and I are in this together, so come along and let's get this journey off the ground.

*Greetings to you, my friend,  
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

I write you with an inkjet full of joy at an altitude of 25,000 feet on Aegean Air flight 530 from my layover in Frankfurt on the way to our destination. Under the plane a solid floor of bleached white cumulus clouds reflect the sun so brilliantly that I can only hold a glance out the window for a moment without my eyes watering. My youngest daughter, Melissa, is sitting two seats to my right, reading the Scriptural text in Greek that will take on such life for us in English.

What you may not realize is that you too are on this flight with me and will not leave my thoughts on this trek for a single waking moment. For whatever reason—probably the ailing economy—the plane is sparsely populated and most of the seats around us are empty. I smile as I fill them with you in my imagination. Your eyes are a little bloodshot from your previous nine-hour flight. The hands on the world clock sped so rapidly that night lasted a total of three hours. You were then spilled out of the plane abruptly at your body's own 1:30 a.m. But let's try not to think about that.

Let's also give one another grace for the way our hair looks right now. Plane-head can be decidedly worse than bed-head simply because you have no bed. Instead, you lash around with gnashing of teeth in a seat that won't go flat. You get restless leg syndrome even in your arms



and neck, and you long for a world of friendly skies in which men either have had their adenoids removed or are forced to remain awake.

Through the years, I've met enough of you face-to-face to know how different you look—all so beautiful to me—and what diverse stories you have. Along the Bible-study way, God has done what we yearned and begged for. He has enlisted us from every conceivable background to study together. We've discovered that we don't always have to see a sight the exact same way to be thankful to God that we beheld it together. Let somebody else search the world over for the handful of people who line up with them 100 percent on every point of Bible interpretation. I'll gladly choose the larger community drawn together by these unbreakable bonds: the life, death, and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God.

Did you hear that over the loud speaker? The pilot just announced our final descent to our destination.

Thessaloniki.

*Welcome!*  
*Beth Moore*



# Group Session One

## VIEW THE VIDEO

### Introduction

In today's opening session, we'll turn to the first of two letters we're studying, and we'll give ourselves completely to the first four words. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and record them here:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_

Luke supplies the backstory of their braiding paths in Acts 15:36–16:5. Consider Acts 15:36-41 first. Keep in mind throughout our journey that Silas in the Book of Acts is called by a more formal “Latinized” name in both 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

1. Silas (Silvanus) entered a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ by a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_. (Compare Acts 9:26-28.)

In preparation for the next point, compare specific wording in Acts 15:39 to Hebrews 10:24. The Greek lexical term used in both verses is *paroxusmós* (English “paroxysm”).

2. The \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ that can \_\_\_\_\_ can also \_\_\_\_\_ (Prov. 27:17).

Now let's see the third member of this party of three added to the mix. Read Acts 16:1-5.

3. The \_\_\_\_\_ we \_\_\_\_\_ could become one of the \_\_\_\_\_ people in our lives.

Fast-forward to Acts 17:1. Follow it up with verses 2-10.

4. A journey \_\_\_\_\_ could lead to the exact \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ God is looking to use.

As we dedicate ourselves to the task ahead, we're going to reach ahead long enough to snatch a phrase out of 1 Thessalonians 4:9: "For you yourselves have been \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_." This English phrase is drawn from one rare compound word in the Greek: *theodidaktoi*.

► Look inside the back cover for the map you can use throughout this study.

See Beth live! Visit [www.lifeway.com/livingproof](http://www.lifeway.com/livingproof) for her event schedule.



children  
of the DAY

Week One

# The Lord's Message Rang Out



## Day One

## The Church of the Thessalonians

**FLASH-FORWARD:** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace. *1 Thessalonians 1:1*

A week ago I met the church of the Thessalonians, at least a sliver of it. Not the heaped-up relics of the one addressed by Paul centuries ago—though I did see a disturbing number of skulls in one ancient house of worship. The church I met was made up of the spiritual descendants of that small band of believers birthed with great travail in Acts 17.

You see, the lungs of Scripture did not deflate with the dying gasps of the original recipients. Paul may not have envisioned the church I saw recently, but the Holy Spirit speaking through him certainly did. Though my daughter Melissa and I had traveled to the other side of the globe to serve this gathering of Thessalonians, we were ill-prepared for the impact they'd have on us. When the doors swung open to the auditorium, women poured into the room like a waterfall coursing through the fingers of God. The clock struck seven, the lights went down, and the first slide in our opening worship showed a pair of wide-eyed Dorothys that we were a long way from Kansas.

Ο Χριστός Θεμέλιο  
 Канара е Христос  
 Christ Alone Cornerstone

The spotlight of three languages washed away my nearsighted vision and sprung my heart wide open to a warm ray of divine splendor. I've ridden wings of planes to multiple foreign fields and have listened with piqued curiosity to the sounds of distinctive languages, but never so many at once. The voices bringing the words to life animated the atmosphere with an indescribable beauty. All five hundred of us in that lovely theater were singing the same praises to the same musical score, but with confessions of faith flowing from three native tongues interwoven into one victor's wreath cast like a crown at Jesus' feet. From the sense of His presence, He seemed as pleased to be enthroned among us as we were to have Him there.

Instead of creating an atmosphere of confusion, the languages fused like long lost friends who'd searched the world over to find one another. A foretaste of glory tipped our tongues—a deposit toward that day when we, “a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one [can] number,” will stand “before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9).

The Greek over the Bulgarian and English seemed fitting. Throughout our week in Greece, the modern variety of the language surrounded us, but the words resembled the ancient tongue of the New Testament enough to stir in us a feeling of continuity. We

sensed that the original plan remains underway, and a thousand years is as a day to our God. He had foreseen our gathering in 21st-century Thessaloniki through those who had first professed Christ on that same beach.

Note how Jesus referred to this continuum in John 17:20: “I pray not only for these, but also \_\_\_\_\_.”

On the eve of His passion, Jesus lifted that first band of Thessalonians before heaven in the cupped hands of His intercession. God knew the exact number of those saved in the initial gospel tide on that eastern Greek shore. He has written each name one by one in the Lamb’s book of life.

The opening video session recalls how the message of Christ first came to the Thessalonians, but let’s make sure we all begin our written work on the same page. Even if you participated in the session, please read Acts 17:1-4 and respond to the following.

To what location did Paul and Silas first go in Thessalonica?

- How many Sabbaths did they serve in Thessalonica—2, 3, or 6?

Carefully read Acts 17:2-3. What method did Paul use in his approach to the Thessalonians?

Compare the relative number of Jews who were persuaded in Thessalonica to the number of devout Greeks (Acts 17:4).

*The original covey of believing Thessalonians was largely Gentile.*

The comparison doesn’t indicate that the church in Thessalonica was more or less than it might have been had the tables been turned. It simply informs us that the original covey of believing Thessalonians was largely Gentile—a statistic that will color the pages of both Bible books before us. Trying to decide which is more beautiful, Jew or Gentile, is a waste of ink. The shades are equally bold but rightfully distinct.

If you’ve studied the Book of James, perhaps you recall the Jewish texture of the body of believers James served. We now behold the flip side of a Christian movement still wet behind the ears. One last question from the segment:

How many leading women joined Paul and Silas? \_\_\_\_\_

I am a woman called to serve women, so statements like “a number of the leading women” jump out at me. You may be the last person on earth looking for a spotlight, but if you’re a woman who pursues God and serves people in this

carnal culture, squint your eyes in the spotlight's brightness. You are “among the number of the leading women,” and you count, Sister. All it takes to lead is for people to see you following Jesus.

Remember our earlier reference to Christ's prayer in John 17:20? That He prayed for those who would believe in Him 20 years later in Acts 17 is not the astonishing part. What most amazes me is that He also prayed with fervent intention for those who would believe in Him today.

I stared into the faces of those Thessalonian women, seeking to memorize each like someone drawing a mural with colored chalk. Nameless, faceless people don't set my heart ablaze to share the Scriptures. Real, warm-blooded, distinct-looking, God-seeking, problem-ridden women do.

As I write, I try to imagine you and the place you call home. I wonder whether you're right- or left-handed, whether you draw your eyebrows down when you study or raise them up. We're not colorful clay that God has rolled into a ball of gray. We are thousands of ones, each present and accounted for on the cross. When we gather in Jesus' name, we are exquisite in our distinctiveness to Him.

*Name three specific characteristics that make you different from your family or friends (tastes, learning style, personality). As you do, try to appreciate your distinctiveness as a child of God instead of resisting it.*

*Jesus also  
prayed for  
those who  
would believe  
in Him today.*

At the close of our first session in Thessaloniki, my friend Chris offered a Scripture-engraved invitation for women to receive Christ as Savior. Our hearts exploded as a crowd 60 people long and several people thick pressed to the platform's edge. Before my very eyes “the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 2) multiplied. The thought was almost more than I could bear.

Would you believe that you rolled into my mind the very next moment? My thoughts did somersaults from Christ's reference to those first disciples in John 17 to those original Thessalonians fewer than 20 years later and on to those newborn Christians gathered right before my eyes. I thought of the wonder of God's Word: the marvel of Scripture etched by the breath of God on the page with every earnest reader in all of human history in mind.

In the address, printed in the first verse of 1 Thessalonians, Paul pictured the faces of those original Thessalonians: some Jews, “a great number of God-fearing Greeks, as well as a number of the leading women” (Acts 17:4). But what about the Holy Spirit pouring words through that quill of a man? Ah, now: He pictured us all.

- How are you impacted by the knowledge that the Holy Spirit had you in mind as Scripture was penned?

So let's gather around the letters postmarked Thessalonica. Lean in like the throng at the altar. Don't let pride or timidity come between you and the presence of God. Press in tightly, professing Christ. You'll be in the company of others but also known intimately by name, circumstance, and condition.

You have a place here—a purpose unique and substantial, not merely some spiritual reality, floating like a fleck in the air.

This is your journey to the shore of Thessalonica, so write your personal signature (use your whole name) and a slice of your biography as you'd introduce yourself here in this sand.

If you know what your given name means, share it here. If you don't know what it means, consider doing some research and adding it.

How would you describe your present circumstances (in the margin)?

This is where we begin. Your circumstances are not coincidental in your journey. God's timing is impeccable. We have before us real words for real crises, real medical diagnoses, real afflictions, real relationships, real doubts, real concerns, and real fears.

For those willing to participate, we're adopting the discipline of writing 1 and 2 Thessalonians in the back of our workbook as we go. The brevity of the books makes it feasible. I commit to you with a grin that, if we ever study the Book of Jeremiah together, we'll forgo this discipline.

Please turn to page 214 and write 1 Thessalonians 1:1 in the Bible translation of your choice.

I'm ecstatic that we've landed together on these Thessalonian shores. Let's not brush the sand off quickly. Let's sit awhile and let the tide come in and wash our eyes with fresh vision for eight beautiful weeks.

We don't always have to see eye to eye to be glad we're side by side. Let's pat the sand beside us and welcome each other along.



## Day Two

# We Recalled

**FLASH-FORWARD:** We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work of faith, labor of love, and endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. *1 Thessalonians 1:3*

“We” is an amazing, empowering word. We are so much stronger than I am. We study so much harder than I would. We believe God for so much more than I could. This tiny, two-letter word is the driving force the Holy Spirit used to push the pen across the scroll and roll it all the way to Thessalonica. Let’s flip some pages of contrast so we can fully embrace the word “we” during the next eight weeks. Glance at the very first verse of the following letters and note each of the names of the writers/senders.

Abbreviate below using the first letter of each name. I’ll get you started by answering the first two:

Romans <i>P</i>	Ephesians	2 Timothy
1 Corinthians <i>P &amp; S</i>	Philippians	Titus
2 Corinthians	Colossians	Philemon
Galatians	1 Timothy	

Star the epistles attributed to one person. Circle the ones attributed to two people. How many of the letters are attributed to three people?

- Now look at the first verse of each letter to the Thessalonians. Who were the writers/senders?

An intriguing anomaly appears in the introduction to Galatians. Additional senders are listed but unnamed (see 1:2). Who are they?

First Thessalonians and Galatians are widely accepted as Paul’s earliest letters. One characteristic, however, sets 1 and 2 Thessalonians apart from Galatians—Paul retains the plural touch almost throughout. He makes several detours into “I,” but “we” predominates. In Galatians, Paul refers to the brothers with him but thereafter addresses the recipients personally.

So, what’s the big deal? We are, that’s what! Over and over in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Silvanus and Timothy are tied up together with Paul by the leathery ribbon of that little inclusive word. Don’t lose sight of that for a moment.

As you copy 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 in the back of your workbook, write the word “we” in capital letters.

### WE

*pronoun, plural in construction.* 1: I and the rest of a group that includes me: you and I; you and I and another or others: I and another or others not including you—used as pronoun of the first person plural.<sup>1</sup>

Notice that the word appears first in reference to prayer and recollection. “We always thank God ... We recall.” We can have no intimacy with God without our individual pursuit of Him, but we also possess an intrinsic need to be part of a team. Our fellow God-chasers challenge our stale prayer lives and loosen the latch on our locked-down thanks. When we’re tempted to claim that God has not been good, their very presence begs to differ. They are mercies of God stuffed in crude human form imprinting decent memories on a difficult time.

Ecclesiastes 4:10 says to “pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.” It’s easy to fall alone but, Girl, it’s hard to get back up.

- Think back on a harsh season of your life and record a good memory —perhaps even a funny one—you carried out of it because of the company of others.

Now look carefully at 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and document three specific things Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy recalled in the presence of God.

## Work of Faith

## Labor of Love

## Steadfastness of Hope

In the Greek, Paul gave it a drumbeat. Say these phrases in the margin several times aloud, and you’ll hear the rhythm for yourself.

When I’m in a particularly negative mood, three thoughts come to me with those phrases: *Faith can be work. Love can be labor. Hope can get long.*

We hear much hairsplitting over faith and works, but does anybody else occasionally think that faith *is* the work? Believing what we cannot see can sometimes be the highest high in the human experience, but at other times it’s like inhaling fire. And just try to convince me that love is never a labor.

The NIV translates the phrase as “your labor prompted by love,” but multiple translations cast love as part of the labor. One scholar translates the Greek as “toil of love.”<sup>2</sup> That’s even better. Sometimes loving comes easy. Other times, it nearly kills us. Does your heart feel like a nail to a hammer right now?

Without using anyone’s name, how has loving been difficult in your experience?

The toil of love climbs to its Everest peak when it is unreturned. Since God has promised to make us like Jesus and because rejection was Christ’s relentless companion, we likely won’t run low on opportunities for unrequited love.

Trying to love a spouse who doesn't love you is torturous. Trying to love a stepchild who wishes you didn't exist is demoralizing. Trying to love a friend through a baffling fiasco is exhausting. Human affection can't bear up. We need a Romans 5:5 kind of work.

### What does Romans 5:5 describe?

We have access to the Holy Spirit welling up in us like a spring. Tapping into Him requires deliberation and cooperation so God can love through us. Like me, you've probably asked Him to love through you, then fizzled out within the hour. Here's the catch: we cannot love when we perceive ourselves as unloved. We cannot offer to others what we don't possess.

Jude 21 says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." That means practicing the mindset of being profusely loved by God. We must invite our souls to plunge into His love like a dolphin romping in the sea. Actively engaging in His unending, extravagant, no-strings-attached affection for you is not narcissism. It's necessity. It can mean our survival when we're faced with loving the loveless.

Glance back at today's "Flash-Forward" and fill in the blanks: your work of \_\_\_\_\_, labor of \_\_\_\_\_, and endurance of \_\_\_\_\_.

Consider also 1 Corinthians 13:13, penned by the same apostle, Paul: "Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love." Those comprise the three abiding priorities and enduring virtues of time and eternity. These facts alone earn each of them a distinct spot on the Enemy's target. Anything God emphasizes, the Devil seeks to exterminate.

Let's examine a short checklist:

Are you in a season where faith feels like hard work? Yes/No

Is loving laborious? Yes/No

Is hope circling the drain as you keep longing and waiting? Yes/No

If you answered yes to all three questions, you're under a triple threat. Satan can't snatch faith, hope, and love from you. You have to hand them over.

When spiritual people are down to the dregs, we often grip tighter to what we have left: our legalism. We fill up the loss with the law. Don't go there. Keep believing, hoping, and loving. All else is just existing.

I recently headed 90 miles west with my oldest daughter's family to spend the afternoon with a large group of friends. The folklore began 25 years ago when six families from the same church decided to spend Thanksgiving together and, to my knowledge, a core group hasn't missed a year yet. Each time we get to go,

*Anything God emphasizes, the Devil seeks to exterminate.*

we pick up right where we left off and laugh like there's no tomorrow. We have to live like that, you know. Tomorrow isn't promised.

What is your current, ongoing reminder that life here is temporal?

I'll tell you one of mine. The ringleader of that gregarious pack of thankful friends is battling brain cancer. Overlooking the severity of his illness would be easier without a six-inch scar on one side of his shaved head. He also happens to be hilarious enough to play the cancer card to get his way: "Hey, Beth, can you cut me a bigger piece of that cake? You know I have cancer."

At times we've talked about his illness with unembarrassed sadness, but we kept it short that recent day. Too much glad chaos was occurring around us. We sat in rocking chairs on the front porch, surrounded by our adult children and watching a flurry of their little ones play tag and chase balls.

As I looked from face to familiar face, my thoughts drew loops around the past and present. A small encyclopedia of life experience tucked in my heart told me that some of those young couples had troubles and doubts. I knew most of their stories, and few escaped the scarring licks of a blazing fire growing up. My daughters didn't escape them, and in no small part, due to their parents. But this wasn't a time for guilt or blame. It was a time for beholding. There before me were the young and the old, the living and the dying, the surviving and the thriving. What a slice of life, I thought, and I whispered under my breath, *Such is common to man.*

But I was wrong. It hit me later that such is common to *redeemed* man. Had we been a large group of unbelievers still bound by legitimate friendship, yes, we would have comprised a fair composite of human life, but our condition in its midst would have been worlds apart.

Faith is a game changer. Know that to your bones.

That night alone in my house, a spring of tears erupted and rushed over me like a levee had broken. A sense of sadness over my friend's illness collided with inexpressible elation and gratitude. Grief and grace rose up within me like two giant wrestlers stopping long enough to shake hands. Pain and beauty tangled in a big knot called hope.

I'm not talking about the theoretical kind of hope. I'm talking about the kind that gets you to your next anniversary when it would be easier to give up now. The kind that gets you through your long season of loneliness so you don't jump into a disastrous marriage on lame legs. The kind that counts on a future whether or not the treatment takes. The kind that gets you through a move when you really want to stay. The kind that grants you something gained after a terrible loss. The kind that ... well, you fill in the blank.

*Such is  
common  
to man.*

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