

## Series: Strengthening your Core?

### Scripture and Background Information for August 29-September 04.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

Last week, we started the series, “*Strengthening your Core?*” With the metaphor of working out in the gym, we looked at how we strengthen the core as a way to improve all other muscles. The series helps us focus on the center of our mission as a church. Today, we will look at **1 Thessalonians 1:4-7** and talk about “*Transforming in Community.*”

#### Background for 1Thess 1:4-7

As we saw last week, the church in Thessalonica flourished, although the believers faced persecution. Paul wrote the letter to the church, encouraging them to continue pressing on in their faith, which was spoken about in the whole region. The church had set their hope, love, and faith in Jesus Christ. He was their core, who gave the church their strength to work and labor in endurance because they saw the lasting influence of their deeds.

Today's text continues with the first point, having Christ as the core. From having Christ as core, Paul continues by thanking God for the evidence of their faith, which was shown in severe suffering. Although facing suffering, the church showed their faith in such a way, that they became examples for other believers. Together, the church received the gospel with joy, even if it meant persecution, hardship, and tribulation.

Questions to engage with the text:

1. Note, in V.4, Paul is not building a theology of election here. Paul uses the elect synonymously with “believers.” He is not speaking about a secret election. Instead, Paul speaks of those who are believers as the elect of God. He reinforces the reality of their faith because it shows in their lives → The gospel did not only come in word only but with power. (\*There has been debate about the doctrine of election in Scripture. The issue would certainly be seen as secondary with Christ followers on different sides. What is clear is that when we talk about the idea of who initiated the relationship between God and His people, Scripture is clear that God initiates from the very beginning (e.g. Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).
2. What are some of the community terms of our text? How does it speak to the type of community we should seek to build with one another?
3. What was the posture of the believers in Thessalonica, although facing much tribulation? How does James 1:2-4 and our text motivate us to embrace tribulation?
4. In what ways do the Thessalonians serve us as an example? What does our text indicate?

*Note: In Christ, the church becomes a new identity with a new mandate: They are sent into a broken world to heal. In the Holy Spirit, the Thessalonians were transformed into the image of Christ. The imitators became examples for many believers so that they serve as an example today.*

**Scriptures for upcoming weeks:**

September 05-11

1Thess 1:8-10