

Take Away:

How are we doing as a church? Are we basing our decisions and actions on the Word of God? Do others see Christ in the things we do? Are we making an impact on our surrounding area?

Most of us are not new believers anymore. After a while, we can become distracted by other things and faith sometimes gets put into neutral. We don't mean for it to happen . . . but it can happen.

Examples of what we could/should be more purposeful about:

- Make it a point to read your Bible every day this week. Be determined to not simply get through your assignment but to listen for what God has to say to you.
- Take some time to evaluate your own walk with God. Find a quiet place and ask yourself the tough questions raised by this text. See where you need to make some changes and prayerfully get to work.
- Set a goal of talking to at least one non-Christian person about your faith in Jesus Christ this week. It doesn't need to be a long conversation. Be intentional about planting some seeds this week.
- Determine to show the love of Christ to others this week. Make it a point to stop and visit someone who is sick or hurting; volunteer to help your neighbor with some yard work; agree to drive someone to a doctor's visit; offer to babysit for a young couple; arrange for someone in need to get some groceries; make it a point to stop and visit with someone you don't usually talk to. Take your role of a missionary seriously and build a bridge with someone this week.

Life Point: Encouragement is found in the lives that ____ live.

Our challenge this morning is to be purposeful to be the hands, the feet, the touch, and the voice of Jesus in our part of the world. If we are going to do what God has called us to do . . . we can't coast. We must continue to practice a faith that is real.

Series: None

Title: Sphere of Influence

Topic: Living for Christ

Intro: Paul was on his 2nd missionary journey:

Acts 17:1-9:

...and Paul and Silas were hustled out of town by Brothers of the faith.

Lesson:

1 Thess. 1: 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. **7** And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. **8** The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, **9** for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, **10** and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath

6: Imitators – mimes, means one who follows. Where we get words like mimics, mime, pantomime, mimeograph.

7: Model – (example) “exact reproduction” – like a copy machine.

8: Rang out – (sounded forth) Only here in the NT. Means “to blast forth” or “to sound forth very intensely”. As in a blaring trumpet.

The Greek verb translated “sounded forth” occurs only here in the New Testament. It is a strengthened form of a weaker verb from which we get our word echo. In other literature, it was used of a clap of thunder, the loud cry of a multitude, a rumor that runs everywhere, or the sound of a loud trumpet.

9: Turned – “to turn in the opposite direction”.

10: Wait – only here in the NT. Refers to expectant waiting; sustained, patient, trusting waiting.



Where they lived: Macedonia in 51 AD

Macedonia was a great province in the Roman Empire, and the capital city in Macedonia was Thessalonica. It was a trading town, a merchandising town. It was a political center, and it was a great port city located at the head of the Aegean Sea.

And what Paul shows here is that lots of trading men that entered the city went away speaking of the remarkable conversion of these Thessalonians. Every ship that entered the port sailed away and spread the news of the remarkable conversion of these Thessalonians.

Now remember, this church is a few months old. And already everybody knows about them. People went east on one highway to the Orient; they were going west on another highway. People were coming up north out of the Aegean Sea and they were taking ships out of there going all over the Mediterranean.

Macedonia included cities like Philippi and Berea to the north and Athens and Corinth to the south.

Then and now: When the old gods are dethroned and the old thrones are torn down, and a new king and a new Lord and a new faith takes its place...how does that look in a brief encounter with someone?

Where we live: our piece of the world

The Thessalonians lived in a thriving port city. Let's compare that to Indianapolis.

Truly a crossroads of America... A happening place.

You could really see how an impact could be great from there.

Let's compare this to Peru...with two major roads that go around and not through town anymore.

Oh that this were true: "You (the people of EBC, in Peru, IN.) became a model to all the believers in Indiana and Ohio. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Indiana and Ohio—your faith in God has become known everywhere. People all over are telling how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

The culture around them:

The people in Thessalonica were:

- ✓ Worshipers of Zeus, in Latin, Jupiter;
- ✓ worshipers of Athena, in Latin, Minerva;
- ✓ worshipers of Aphrodite and Astarte, in Latin, Venus;
- ✓ worshipers of Artemis, in Latin, Diana;
- ✓ gods many and lords many.

Every temple had its shrines, and every street corner had its god and its statue and its idol. And these people in Thessalonica turned around and began to serve a God that could not be seen nor imagined and became followers of Jesus the Nazarene.

"Why, it was an unbelievable, phenomenal, remarkable thing: these cultured and educated people turning to a despised Jew, who was crucified as being God Himself, and worshipping Him." A. W. Criswell

Verse 9b: "...that they *turned to God from idols*, not from idols to God. It wasn't that they had become fed up with their idols and then decided to give God a chance. No, they turned to God and found Him so satisfying that they dropped their idols. Let us never lose the sense of thrill and awe that is implicit in this account. Two men go into a heathen city with the word of the Lord. They preach the gospel in the power of the Spirit. The miracle of regeneration takes place: men and women become so enraptured with the Savior that they abandon their idols." JMac

How does that kind of message get spread around the countryside from travelers through a busy city? Not every traveler encountered a Christian, surely!

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