

October 18, 2026

Be An Example

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Yesterday, while watching tv, I asked Toby if every boy is taught to tie a tie by his dad. He said, “Pretty close, but I don’t know about that anymore.”

Hmmm ... do we live in a different time than the times of our childhood? Is it a good different or a bad different? My sermon title is “Be An Example” ... but I probably should have said ... “Be a Good Example,” because no matter what we do, good or bad, we are being an example – so we should choose to be a good example.

Back to the tie ... what are we teaching our children and grandchildren? What are we teaching those around us? Are we showing by example, by word, by lesson how to get by successfully, how to live thankfully, how to be a blessing to those around us, how to respond in patience, how to live joyfully, how to be forgiving, how to love one another ... how to live a life that glorifies God, giving Him all the praise that is rightfully His?

In today’s passage from 1 Thessalonians, Paul is writing to the church that he established in Thessalonica. Paul is telling them that he thanks God always for them – he’s proud of how they are living their lives, and continues to pray for them. Paul says that he thanks God for their work of faith, how they labor in love and how steadfast they are their hope in Jesus Christ.

Paul tells the Thessalonians that God has chosen them – it’s evident in how the Holy Spirit is working through them. It’s evident in how they have become imitators of Jesus Christ – persecuted for their faith, but receiving God’s Word with joy! And with this all ... they have become an example to all the other believers who see them, who hear about them.

Paul tells them that he’s heard good things about how they have turned away from the idols in their lives and instead serve our living and true God, how they are faithfully, patiently, joyfully, waiting for Jesus to return.

Wow! To have someone look at our lives and see that we live for God and not for ourselves!

But here’s the thing ... we aren’t to live a good Christian life, be a good example, for the praise we might receive from others. We shouldn’t be expecting any kind of a pat on the back ... but to know that how we live our lives has become a good example to those around us, to those who know Jesus but haven’t figured out how to fully turn their backs on the backs on the ways of the world, who haven’t been totally able to give up idols in their lives ... it feels good to know that we are living for Jesus, able to guide others toward the only way to be successful. It feels good to know that we can show others how to live a life filled with patience, forgiveness, love and joy – glorifying God in all we do!

Because Paul went to Thessalonica, and preached in the synagogue, there were many who accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ and were saved! Possibly hundreds of them!! Of the about a quarter of a million people who lived in the city, the number who were saved might not sound like a lot ... but the other Jews in town were getting jealous – they didn’t like what they considered to be trouble being caused all over the world and now it had come to their own town.

In Acts 17, we can read ... *“Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. (and then Paul said) ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,’ he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.”*

Influential people were being saved and it was being noticed and getting people angry at Paul.

When these people came to know Jesus as their own Savior, they had a total life change and the world was watching them. It reminds me of the mass baptisms, the revivals happening at colleges across the United States. The world started noticing what was going on! It was in the news. Testimonies were shared, lives were changed, addictions were escaped, and those who already knew Jesus became excited about their revived faith and had a desire to be more than the mundane Christians they had become. They had the drive to speak of their faith unashamedly!

When a church, a people, a community, even an individual is on fire, is excited about their faith in Jesus Christ – the world starts noticing. And guess who else takes notice ... yep, God does, too!

God wants us to become alive with purpose and with love, with action, with a passion for His Son, Jesus. God wants us to yearn for the lost, wants us to ache for the world that is dying around us – God wants us to be a part of the change the world sees and craves.

That's what I want for us here at First Baptist ... I want God to find us actively being His hands, his feet, his arms, his heart for the world. I want the world to see us revived and excited about our salvation and unashamedly sharing that excitement with everyone.

In verses 6 and 7, Paul wrote: *And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired from the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.*

We cannot be effective in reaching people for God unless we have been touched and changed by God ... and the Thessalonians had been changed.

I look around at all of us and I see and feel the desire to be a difference, to invite the lost, the stranger, the struggling into our family, but sometimes we just don't know what to do about it. Sometimes we think we can't do it by ourselves. Sometimes we worry that we don't have what it takes. Sometimes we are afraid of how much it will cost us ... our time, our finances, maybe even our safety. But that's just it ... alone, we can't do it. With the Holy Spirit – we can accomplish great things, make a great difference and be a good example. Following the Holy Spirit's guidance in how we should imitate Jesus Christ, the world ... or maybe just the neighborhood ... just might start talking about us, too.

Example is one of the most powerful teaching tools – people imitate what they see. I know I learn best by watching someone else do what I want to learn ... don't just tell me, show me! I remember my kids getting annoyed when their friends copied them. I would remind them that imitation is the greatest form of flattery.

If we truly follow Jesus' example and live in love, forgiveness, joy, unity ... As we imitate Jesus, we teach our kids, our grandbabies, our friends, strangers, how to live righteously and get along in this world! We teach them they can find freedom in Jesus. And in so doing, we flatter Jesus!

Real evangelism, really spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, is more than just talk, more than sharing a good sermon, singing a much-loved hymn or worship song ... It's living a changed life. Real evangelism is spread by both our lips and our lives!

We have been saved to serve, not to just sit around waiting. Jesus reached out to the lost. Jesus brought hope to a hurting world. Jesus taught the Scriptures. Jesus became the Light to those living in darkness. Jesus wasn't afraid to reach out to the children – in fact, He told us that that's what we should be doing. Jesus brought comfort to those who grieved. Jesus fed the hungry. Jesus encouraged the lonely.

Acts 10:38 reads: *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

Let's remember every moment to live like we truly believe that God is with us – do all kinds of good out of real love and servitude, desiring to glorify God always – so that no one will doubt to whom we belong! Let everyone see that the joy of the Lord is truly our strength!

Let's be an example ... a Good Example ... to other Christians and even to those who do not yet believe ... for one day all will believe ... let's make sure it's not too late for anyone to know that their debt has been paid by Jesus Christ ... all they need to do is say "Yes!"