Focused Part 10 2 Thess 1:1-4
Community Group Questions
1. Do you use your words to encourage others?
2. How often do you praise God for the people in your life?
3. How often do you brag about other people?
4. Do you feel like your love for other people is growing?
5. What role does your faith play when things are going wrong?

Vrs 1-2 Paul wrote this letter probably 3 months after the his first letter to the Thessalonian church. Paul was still in Corinth and received some good news about the church there in which we talk about today and some not so good news in which we will talk about in the coming weeks.

Today In 2 Thess 1:3-4 we are going to learn how we can be an encouragement to those around us.

Vrs 3-4 Paul in his missionary journeys would go and preach the Gospel, disciple the people who got saved and help them get a local church started. Remember he was driven out of Thessalonica. Many of the areas he did work in struggled to stay on track but Thessalonica was a church that was doing great even though they were having difficulties.

So Paul was really encouraged, kind of like a proud parent when you see your children doing well.
Being it is mothers day...moms what do you do when your children make you proud?
1. Tell them (Atta boy/girl)
2. Tell God (thanks the Lord)
3. Tell others (that is why parents are on Facebook)

Interestingly enough you as their parent desire to encourage them because they have already encouraged you. How did they encourage you? By what they did.

Primarily there are two ways you can encourage people...**words of encouragement and acts of obedience** that bring encouragement.

Words of encouragement...there are three ways you can use your words
-Tell them Paul starts this letter by saying "we ought to always give thanks to God for you because..."
Then he proceeded to tell them what they did and how he is encouraged by it.

James Boyce in his commentary says..."Like a mother who tenderly yet firmly encourages a young child who has been "roughed up" on the playground, Paul's loving arms now surround and encourage this community."

Paul realized that telling the people they were doing a good job would be encouraging to them.

Everyone appreciates recognition for their accomplishments, but few people make the need known quite as clearly as the little boy who said to his father: "Let's play darts. I'll throw and you say 'Wonderful!'"

How are you doing in this area of your life? Are you known to the people around you as an encourager?
Why? Why not?
Here are some tips...
-Write a note, text or email
-Focus on the small things

-Tell God (thank God)
Often times we forget to thank God...When things are good we easily forget the gifts are from God. When things are bad we forget about what we should be thankful for.

Who in your life should you be praising God for, someone who helped you, mentored you, taught you. When you practice thanking God for them what you start doing is pray for them.

-Tell Others (boast) when most of us think of boasting we feel that it is wrong because our experiencing with boasting is mostly focused about puffing ourselves up.

But here Paul lets us know that it is ok to boast about other people, especially if it helps inspire other people to live a life that is more pleasing to the Lord.

Many people only talk about other people when they are gossiping about them...why not commit to only saying kind and uplifting things about other people, go the extra mile and if someone is saying something negative about another look for something positive to say. You will do two things...maintain your testimony and possible shut them up

Next Paul reminds us that there are two **Acts of obedience** that Paul commends them for that bring great encouragement to him.

Growing love-
Maybe the people or person you seek to encourage words has not acted in a way that you can honestly say...Good job to them, you are not praising God on behalf of them and you are not boasting about them to anyone. Did you know you can still encourage them? Love them
Paul is so encouraged by the way they show one another love. The act of showing another person love can do amazing things...

You see love will grow cold in many people, it is actually a characteristic of the end times. Because love grows cold in many if you become a person who displays love you will make an impact on a person even if they are a very negative miserable person.

Do you understand the power of love?
-It motivates
Thomas Kempis said "Whoever loves much, does much"
How much we love will motivates us to act in loving ways

-It communicates
One ingenious teenager, tired of reading bedtime stories to his little sister, decided to record several of her favorite stories on his computer. He told her, "now you can hear your stories anytime you want. Isn't that great?" She looked at the computer for a moment and then replied, "No. It hasn't got a lap."
How much we love will dictate how we act and how we act will communicate that love

-It protects
Richard Halverson There is nothing you can to do make God love you more! There is nothing you can do to make God love you less! His love is Unconditional, Impartial, Everlasting, Infinite, Perfect!
How much we will show others what we are willing to do for them.
And as Christians we have the greatest example in Jesus "greater love" GOSPEL

When we understand Jesus' love we trust him or have "faith" in Him.
Our second act of obedience which brings encouragement is...
Growing faith-an outworking of our faith can be seen in difficult circumstances that come into our lives
We can say we are people of faith but the rubber meets the road when things do not go well or the pressure is on.

The believers in Thessalonica were being attacked, remember Paul was ran out of town. Well in these short verses we see that the persecution did not hinder their faith their faith actually grew through it.

How about you? Does a bad time bring out the worst in you? How do you handle difficulty, adversity or persecution?

Well I think one of the questions we ask when trouble, adversity or persecution comes is...why?

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

But how does this encourage others? They can see that you really believe what you say you believe but more then that you become a walking illustration that faith in Jesus works.

They show us in real life how our faith has the miraculous power of helping us deal with difficult things **Horatio Spafford** a wealthy real estate investor in Chicago 1870
-Well respected for his faith and because of his wife, 4 daughters and his son he said he "felt blessed beyond measure"
-In 1871 his son died of scarlet fever
-A few months later in October the great Chicago fire happened and wiped out Horatio's real estate investments
-In 1873 he decided to join his friend DL Moody on an evangelistic tour around England, he felt this would be good for his family after all they had been through.

-But a day before the trip he had to stay in Chicago for a few extra weeks.
-He insisted that his wife and four daughters go ahead without him and he would join them in a few weeks.
-On Nov 22, 1873 the ship encountered heavy fog in North Atlantic and was rammed by a cargo vessel and the ship sunk in 12 minutes 246 passengers including Spafford's four daughters perished at sea.
- His wife Ana survived and when the rescue ship brought her to Whales she Cabled her husband in Chicago with a two word message "Saved Alone"
-He immediately booked a trip to go and be with his grieving wife and said to a friend "I am glad to trust the Lord when it costs something"
-On the Long journey across the Atlantic Horatio spent the hours deep in thought, prayer and contemplation.
-Four days into the journey the captain said to Horatio "I believe we are passing the spot in which your families ship went down"
-At that moment of darkness Horatio said "the light of God's promises shined in my heart"
-So he felt the urge to express what his heart was feeling and penned the words of the great hymn "It is Well"
When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.

How do we have that kind of faith? Call on Jesus

Psalm 50:15 and call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."