

Getting to know you: When non-believers hear that “Christians are prepared,” what do you think that phrase means to them?

Reaching out: Did anyone seize an opportunity to love someone who is not a Christian through works or words in the past week? Share what happened.

Reaching Up: As you prepare your hearts and minds to engage with God’s Word, take a moment to pray that our Heavenly Father would:

- Remind you of how much He loves you today. Right now.
- Remind you to “be still” and savor this “spiritual meal” you are about to partake in.
- Remind you of how He gave us community to learn, grown and flourish.

“Be prepared.” That’s the motto of the Boy Scouts. That’s a coach’s message to his team. And in Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians, he assures his readers that those two words can help them experience peace and stability in their lives — despite what they might see and hear going on around them.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 together and discuss the questions that follow.

1. Find the peace in Jesus’ timing (v. 1-4)

Paul begins the chapter by assuring the Thessalonians that Jesus hasn’t returned yet because certain events haven’t occurred — namely, the great rebellion and the presence of the man of lawlessness.

•In Paul’s day — and to a large degree, today — there is plenty of speculation as to who the antichrist is. Often, people point to presidents, entertainers and others in the spotlight as possibilities. Why do you think this is so?

•Pastor Jeff noted in his sermon, “The purpose of any prophecy about the end times is not so we can build a calendar, but so we can build our character.” What does that statement mean to you?

•If we are going to “live prepared,” we must be busy carrying out the call of Jesus in our lives. What are some practical ways we can do this?

2. Knowing the grace of a godly presence (v. 5-7)

There were certain entities in place that helped to restrain evil during the time of this letter’s writing — government, law enforcement, etc. — and the same holds true in our day. But as Christians, our greatest protection is in the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.

•Explore the terms “common grace” and the “grace of salvation.” How are they evidence of God’s presence in the world? Use James 1:17, Matthew 5:45, and Ephesians 2:8-10 as your guides.

•As followers of Christ, we all have a ministry of restraint since we’ve been indwelt with the power of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-8). What are some ways we can be vessels of Christ and take on an active role in restraining evil?

3. We’ll face the reality of dismissing truth. (v. 9-12)

Apart from submitting ourselves fully to God, we are accepting Satan’s lies. Or, as Pastor Jeff noted, “our sin is not little sin; it’s choosing Satan’s ugliness and evil.”

•Today’s culture seems bent on denying absolute truth. Why is this dangerous to our society?

•God is remarkably patient with us and doesn’t want anyone to perish. Read John 1:12, Titus 2:11 and 2 Peter 3:9. Discuss this good news and how it should encourage us to share it.

4. Embrace the power of Jesus’ victory. (v. 8b)

As Pastor Jeff shared in his sermon, this “spoiler” verse brings the entire passage together: “... whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.”

•During those times when we are shaken, who is our authority — cable TV news, Facebook, friends at work? How do we filter those fearful and distracting messages through the Word of God?

•How can this verse encourage you to face the future with confidence and hope?

Jesus said to them, “You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy ... I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” — John 16:20, 33