

“Incredibly Normal”

Use this guide as a tool to help you prepare to experience spiritual transformation in a practical way. It is a flexible guide that will help you discover, own, and apply the truths of God’s Word.

Message Summary

Paul’s adventures through Macedonia were quite extraordinary. He had one goal – to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul’s work in Philippi, his first stop in Macedonia, got him thrown out of town. So he went to Thessalonica and Berea. He did the same thing there and developed a reputation of being a troublemaker.

Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke traveled to Thessalonica and began to speak to the Jews in the synagogue reasoning with them and trying to convince them that Jesus is the Messiah. After some time, turmoil, and victory, Paul had sufficiently angered the Jews and they decided to hunt him down. In his short stay, Paul not only had won some to faith in Christ but also had built enough of a relationship with some of the converts that one of them, Jason, welcomed his party into his house. The authorities knew this and so they went searching for Paul and Silas and when they couldn’t find them, they took the next best thing; Paul’s disciple, Jason.

While the text seems to make Paul the focal point, notice the authorities didn’t see any difference between Paul and Jason or any of the other Christian converts. In their eyes, they were all the same. According to the religious leaders, all the Christians were acting against the decrees of Caesar by following a different King and His name was Jesus.

Acts 17:6-7 is not only an indictment against Paul but nothing short of what the normal Christian life should be. However, in many cases, we live in a Christian culture that says Christianity is supposed to be safe. It is supposed to come with only blessings and not curses. Much of popular preaching encourages people to never go to the hard places and to always look for the blessings of God in their life as a litmus test of their faith in God. This is often billed as a “normal” Christian life but according to God’s word is far from the truth.

There were 3 accusations made against the Christians in the text. The first was specifically addressed to Paul. “These men who were causing trouble, turning the world on it’s head, had come to Thessalonica.” The second was addressed to Jason, “Jason has received these troublemakers, he has shown them hospitality, he has welcomed them.” And finally, the third accusation was addressed to every believer, “They all are acting against Caesar and say there is another king and his name is Jesus.” By implication, all three are representative of the believing population and should be examined in light of our lives today. Therefore, the message examined three aspects of the normal Christian life and how we should respond.

As you prepare to meet with your Missional Community this week, ask yourself the following questions. In a court of law, would I be found guilty of the same “crimes” as the believers in Thessalonica? Would my life be considered a normal Christian life? Also ask yourself if your Missional Community is an environment where the normal Christian life can be lived out. Prayerfully consider these questions and ask God to work in your life as you seek to live an incredibly normal Christian life!

Message Outline

What is the normal Christian life?

1. We have a new Mission.
 The Word, not the world, is our Authority.
 Proclaiming Jesus, not ourselves, is our Passion.
 Spreading the Gospel, not our popularity, is our Objective.
2. We belong to a new Community.
 Hospitality & Burden-bearing is a way of loving.
 Sacrifice & Suffering is a way of living.
3. We serve a new King.
 We live sent.
 We show & share the Gospel.
 We live counter-cultural.
 We die to self and live for Christ.

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Group Discussion (video application)

Watch the video titled “Disciple-making Environment.” Use the Listening Guide below as you watch the video and then spend some time making application by answering the following questions as a group.

What is a Disciple? (Matthew 4:19)

- Follow me – _____ Jesus.
- Make you – New _____.
- Fishers of men – obey His _____.

A disciple is one who is increasingly _____ Jesus, being _____ by Jesus, and _____ His commands and _____ others to do the same.

What is Discipleship?

“Leading others to increasingly _____ all of life to the _____ presence and _____ of Jesus Christ.”

How do you create an environment where discipleship takes place?

1. Start with _____ (above)
2. How might we shape an environment that helps people...
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

3 Key Elements

1. Life on _____
 - Life that is _____ and _____. (Mark 3:14)
 - Classrooms are not _____; just not _____.
 - If all you do is have a weekly _____ you will not make _____!
2. Life in _____
 - _____ discipleship is not in scripture.
 - If you are _____ in the faith you need to make it _____ for those who are _____ in the faith to _____ you.
 - I’m not the primary _____ in the group...the _____ is!
3. Life on _____
 - The mission is the best _____ for our need of _____ power & presence to be realized.
 - The _____ of mission leads you to the _____ of the mission; Jesus by His _____.

Questions for reflection:

1. Do you have a clear definition of what a disciple is that you all agree upon? Could you say “this” is a disciple and “this” is what discipleship is?
2. As we consider our current situation and our MC life together, is this life pushing people towards living life on life, life in community, and life on mission? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. What would need to change as a group in our life lived together for this to be a life on life, life in community, life on mission disciple-making environment, so that people are being developed into fullness in Christ?

Weekly Prayer Focus

- **Church:**
Development of Missional Communities.
- **Local:**
Engaging people in our neighborhoods.
- **Global:**
Paul & Sarah Young & children. Also Dakota Baptist Church, Fort Totten, North Dakota.