

# Anxious Heart, Look Up!

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Tonight, we're beginning a series in the book of 1 Thessalonians, and we're going to walk through this book, and the title and the theme of this book is Awaiting the Son, Looking for the Son from Heaven.

As I was studying this, I was reading notes from a friend about the book, and it struck me that the coming of Christ is mentioned in every chapter of this book, and that's why we focus in on this and say, this is the theme.

We are waiting for the Son from Heaven. We have our outlines tonight, and our title is Anxious Heart Lookup. You see, friends, there's times that we find ourselves just struggling.

We're shaken, we're distracted, we're discouraged, sometimes we're despairing, and what we need most of all is to look to Christ. Now, let me ask you this as we're getting started, how many of you, let me ask this a different way, I always get questions wrong, it's hard to ask a question sometimes, how long, think with me, how long have you been familiar with biblical Christianity?

How many years? If we were to do a little survey here, how many would say, I have been familiar with biblical Christianity for at least a solid year? Would you raise your hand real quick?

[ 1 : 1 9 ]     We're just going to do a quick thing here. How about five years? Keep your hand up if, okay. How about 10 years? 15? 20? Should we keep going?

30? 40? There's a lot of folks in here who've been familiar with the gospel, with the Bible, with biblical Christianity for years, if not decades.

That was not the case of the people who received this letter. In Thessalonica, you have a group of people that they grew up pagan.

They knew very little about the one true God. Some were familiar with Judaism. Some perhaps even were interested in Judaism. But as far as knowing Jesus and knowing the gospel, they found out over the course of a couple weeks, maybe a month, maybe slightly longer.

We're actually going to start out in the book of Acts chapter number 17 because I want to give you a picture of where these people were when they receive a letter from the apostle Paul. In Acts 17, you find Paul and company coming into Thessalonica.

[ 2 : 3 2 ]     This is a city in modern-day Greece. It was an important Roman city that was right smack dab on some trade routes, ancient trade routes in the region.

And these people have Paul and Silas coming into town. And let's start reading in verse 1 and get a few of the things that the scripture says about the conditions under which these people heard about Jesus.

Now, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.

Now, note that because it's really important. Paul comes into the city, and typically his pattern was, he was a Jewish man. He knew how to speak to Jews.

He knew how to speak to Gentiles too, but he would start off with the Jews because they had scripture. They knew about God. They came from a foundation where he could quickly bring them to Christ.

[ 3 : 37 ] And so he goes in, and for three weeks, three Saturdays, he's preaching Christ. He's showing scripture that pointed to Jesus. And that is really the extent of his ministry to the Jews.

And while that is taking place, there are a number of Gentiles, non-Jewish people that are listening and watching. Would you look with me in verse three? Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ.

And some of them believed. Praise God for that. And consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks, a great multitude, and of the chief women, not a few.

So packed into these few verses, we've got to use our biblical scriptural imaginations to get an idea of what's going on. He goes into the synagogue. He's speaking to a Jewish audience.

And somehow you have a few Jews that believe, but you have a whole pile of Greeks and of these devout women that believe as well.

[ 4 : 45 ] And so you have a movement starting to take place in this city. Let's continue reading. But the Jews, which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the base resort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out of the people.

Once you get to verse 5, you have problems. You have jealousy taking place. The Jews that didn't believe are looking and saying, this guy has a lot of people who want to hear him, and a lot of people who are following his teaching.

And since they didn't believe, they said, we've got to put a stop to this new movement. And so do you see what they do? They go and get some thugs, also known as lewd fellows of the base resort.

That's quite a biblical phrase. They get some thugs, and they attack. They assault. They get a riot together, and go after the house.

They're going after Paul and Silas at the house of Jason. Apparently, this guy Jason was one of the people who had his home as a meeting place. And so you have this movement that's gathering in Jason's house.

[ 5 : 58 ] And these Jews who don't believe, they're out for blood, is really what they wanted. They want to take Paul and Silas out, but they don't find him.

And so they take some of the Christians. They take Jason, and they bring them to the civic leaders in the town. And their accusation, they say, these people are saying that there's another king.

They're worshipping another king. Does that sound familiar? It kind of sounds like what the Jews in Jerusalem did when Christ was crucified. They said, hey, we're not going to have any king but Caesar, those unbelieving Jews.

And these people said, these are followers of another king, one king named Jesus. And so can you imagine that? You grew up, you worshiped pagan gods, and then you hear about Jesus.

And it's exciting. It's amazing to hear that God sent his son to come and die for your sins. And there's so much excitement about this message.

[ 7 : 04 ] And people are telling their neighbors, and they're telling their friends. And there's just this explosion of faith. And then just like that, like as quick as it came, persecution arises.

And Paul and Silas, the ones who came and preached Christ, they're gone. And they have to send them away for their own safety to another city. What would that be like?

You don't have a Christian heritage. You don't have family that have been Christians for a long time. You didn't grow up going to church. You didn't have Awanas. You don't have a history of churches over thousands of years that have been following and believing Christ.

You may not even have a copy of the scripture for yourself to read. And you are in a situation that is hostile to your faith.

How do you think you would feel? Me imagining myself in that situation, I'd be like, okay, this is a bit more than I bargained for. I'm not sure if I'm ready for this. Can you give me a few more classes about what this faith is so I know how to stand and defend it?

[ 8 : 07 ] And man, I'm just not sure what to do. It's exciting that I have Jesus as my Savior, but I got a lot of questions. And that is the church at Thessalonica. And so what happens is after Paul has to move on to another city, he is just torn up on the inside.

And we read in 1 Thessalonians that he had to send Timothy back to go check on them and to say, hey, how are you doing? I'm worried about you. You had a rough go of it. And I want to find out about your faith.

And Timothy had come back to Paul and told Paul, hey, they're doing good. They got questions. They got some issues, but they're standing firm in Jesus. Praise God for that. And so he writes this letter to the Thessalonians to help them, to comfort them, and to strengthen them.

That's really the theme of this letter is comfort. It's strength. In fact, comfort is the first command that's given. See, this book is a lot like the book of Ephesians.

If you're familiar with Ephesians, Ephesians is six chapters divided into two sections. The first three chapters are all simply, this is how much God loves you, and this is what he's done for you.

[ 9 : 13 ] The last three chapters are, okay, because of all of this, this is how you should live your life. Thessalonians is kind of like that, except it's even more extreme. Basically, four chapters are, this is what God has done for you, and this is how much we love you, and we care about you, and we're praying for you, and we're cheering for you.

And then you have a chapter and a couple extra verses of, now this is what you should do. And the first command is comfort. This is a book of comfort, because you have some Christians that they are struggling.

They're having a hard time, and they needed help. Friends, we come, even with all that we know, even with the years of Bible preaching and Christian activity, with all the history of Christianity we have in our lives, do we not also struggle?

Do we not also find ourselves sometimes shaken, doubting, discouraged, maybe not knowing what step to take next? We struggle with sinfulness and uncertainty and weakness, and there's so many things that, where we are just like these people in Thessalonica, and we too need established, we need stabilized, we need strengthened, and that's what 1 Thessalonians is going to do for us.

And so as we walk through this, it's amazing to see that the thing that Paul sends to a young church, and according to, you know, history and, you know, studying the scriptures, this is considered the first letter that Paul wrote.

[ 10 : 45 ] You know, we've got lots of letters in the New Testament, you know, 1st and 2nd Corinthians and Galatians, and all of those letters. Out of all those, this is the first one that Paul wrote to a church. And out of all the things that he could say to strengthen them and establish them, Greg and I were talking about this message this afternoon, and he made the observation, the thing that Paul tells them is, look up, Jesus is coming back, and he fully expects that that is what is going to comfort their hearts, and that's what's going to establish them.

So tonight, five reminders that steady, anxious hearts. How about this? Let's pray, let's ask God to help us, and then we're going to run through these one at a time, looking through the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians.

Father, we come to you, and it is just a joy to gather together. Lord, it is wonderful to sing praise to your name. It's wonderful to have many years of history in the Scripture, in churches.

Lord, I thank you for the church that I grew up in, and for the people who faithfully taught me the Bible. And Lord, I know my own need. I know the battles that I face.

And Lord, I thank you for your word that you give us just what we need to help us and to strengthen us and to stabilize us. God, I pray tonight, as we come to your word, that our hearts would be ready to receive, that we'd be ready to look up, to look for the sun, and to allow this truth to permeate our hearts, so that those things that would make us unsteady, the things that would shake us to our core, Lord, you would put us at ease tonight, knowing that you are God, you have saved us, and you are coming back for us.

[ 12 : 33 ] Those are incredible truths, Lord. I pray they'd be very real to us tonight. Praise things in Jesus' name. Amen. If you turn over there to 1 Thessalonians with me, we're going to walk through these one at a time, and a couple verses at a time, going through this first chapter.

So, like any good five-paragraph essay, the first portion is going to lay out the thesis and the reason for the letter. I'll tell you, that was one of my least favorite classes in college, but one of the most helpful, a five-paragraph essay.

And so, starting off in verse 1, there's an introduction. Now, when we read through this, please look carefully with me, because at first reading, this sort of sounds like a grab bag of just all kinds of things, all kinds of comments that are put together, but there's a purpose for each word.

Verse 1. Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father, knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

[ 13 : 56 ] Here's your first point, your first reminder. God cares deeply for you. God cares deeply for you. Did you catch it in those first few verses? Let's back up real quick, and I want to show you some of the things that the Scripture tells us about God's care for us, even in the very first verse.

Let's read that one more time, and look what God is doing, and look at what God has done. Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you see what's going on there? He's saying, you are a church. You are a gathering of believers, and you find yourself in God the Father and in the Son.

This is going to be a pattern in the first two verses of the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son. Did you see the second one? He says, you are in the Father and in the Son, and you are receiving something from the Father and from the Son.

What were they receiving? Grace and peace. Grace and peace were more than just like, hey, how are you doing? He's saying, I know that you are in the Father and in the Son, and I know that you are receiving grace and peace from the Father and from the Son.

[ 15 : 18 ] Your next two blanks are these. We are joined to God. That is a truth about what God has done in salvation that is, it's a little bit beyond my comprehension or my ability to explain it, but there is a truth in the Scripture that when a person believes in Jesus, we are now part of the body of Christ.

We are in the Father and in the Son, and the Father and the Son have come to live in us. We are joined to God in a way that is, I don't even know what the right word to say.

It's more real than like any other partnership or relationship or friendship. I am in His body as a believer, and He dwells in me.

That is amazing. He is, we are joined to God. And second thing, we are sustained by God. His grace, His peace, it is coming to us as believers continually.

He writes to these Christians and He says, listen, you're in the Father and the Son, and the Father and the Son, they are giving, imparting grace and peace into your life. We are sustained by God.

[ 16 : 33 ] And then when you get down to verse number three, He's going to talk about our faith, our hope, our love. Look at the words He uses in verse two, excuse me, verse three. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, in labor of love, in patience of hope.

Now again, watch the Father and the Son. It's swapped this time, but He says, in our Lord Jesus Christ, our faith is in Jesus, right?

Our love is for Jesus, and our hope is in Jesus. And faith produces works, love produces labor, hope produces patience in our lives.

He says, all of those things go together, and where are they found? They're all in Jesus. But they're not just in Jesus. We live out the Christian life in the sight of God, in the sight of God.

Now again, these words are all very intentional. Not one is wasted. And He's speaking to these Christians. Again, they are new.

[ 17 : 35 ] They're super, super new, right? They didn't grow up in church. They don't have their Bibles to take home with them. They haven't heard hundreds of messages. At most, maybe they had a month or two, perhaps, with the Apostle Paul, their preacher.

And then they're on their own. But He says, listen, God's eyes are upon you. God's sight is resting upon your life. And as you are trusting in Jesus, and you're walking in love to Jesus, and your hope is in Jesus, you are living in the sight of God.

You know, the sight of God is a good thing. And it's not something to be feared. I think we can get in our minds that God looking upon us, He looks upon us maybe in surveillance, like He's watching your every move, checking to make sure you're doing things just so, or scrutiny, right?

He's watching to catch you in your sin. But the idea of God's face being upon people, God's sight being upon people in the Old Testament, it is corrective, right?

Because there's no place that we can hide from God. But more than corrective, it is care. Because for God to put, for God's face to be turned towards us, for God to be looking upon my life, it means that He's paying attention.

[ 18 : 56 ] And it means that He cares. And if God did not care, He would turn away. That's how it's shown in the Old Testament. Let's listen to one verse here. Psalm 67, 1 through 2, listen to these words.

God be merciful unto us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us. Selah. Think about that. That God's face is looking upon His people.

It's like a father watching his children at play. He loves them. He adores them. And He's seeing that they are cared for and seeing that they are well. You know, this is also not something that we have to go out and try and earn.

We are going way too slow to finish up in 12 minutes. But I really want you to get a hold of this. This God's sight upon us is not something that we're going out and trying to earn.

I've thought this way many times. Even there's verses in the Bible that would seem to indicate that it's like God only really pays attention to those people who are super Christians, who are super spiritual.

[ 20 : 00 ] 2 Chronicles 16, 9, listen to these words. And we've got to be careful that we don't misinterpret these or misapply them. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.

You can take that down a very wrong road and say, man, if I just don't have everything nailed down and figured out and I'm not a super Christian, then God is going to pass over me and look for somebody else to use.

What does it mean for our heart to be perfect towards God? It means that we love Him and that we trust Him. Do you love Jesus? Do you trust Jesus?

Are you saved? His face is looking upon you. Your life is not lived in darkness. His sight, His gaze is upon you right now.

And it's a gaze of care. It's a gaze of compassion. Our lives are lived out in faith, in the Son, and in the gaze of the Father.

[ 21 : 02 ] We're going to see the Holy Spirit come into play a little bit later on, how the Holy Spirit is active in their salvation. But we've got to go on to number two. Reminder number two. Your faith is real and the gospel is powerful.

Your faith is real and the gospel is powerful. Would you go with me down to verse number five? It says, For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance, as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. Think about all the ways that the gospel came to them. Paul's reminding them, listen, in that short time that we were with you, when we told you the word of God, it wasn't a story.

It wasn't just a fairy tale. It wasn't just a collection of words. It was words, right? The gospel message has words. Christ died for our sins and rose again, right?

There are words in the gospel message. But he says it's more than words. It is powerful and it is real. It came to you in power. It came in the Holy Ghost. What does the Holy Ghost do in our salvation?

[ 22 : 15 ] He convicts us and he seals us and he fills us and there's joy in the Holy Ghost. He says, yes, there was difficulty. Notice how he said you received the word in affliction.

There was much difficulty. But when you received the word, it changed your life. I think the idea here is that he's reminding them. This whole thing of being a Christian, of believing in Jesus, it's not just a phase, right?

It's not a phase that you're going through. It's not something that you just got caught up in the hype. No, God's word came to you.

It's real. It's powerful. It made a difference. That thing that happened to you, that is going to change your life forever. So listen, friends, your faith is real.

John 15, 11 says, These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full. Jesus says that as he's been teaching his disciples about his departure from them, about the coming comforter, which is also known as the Holy Ghost.

[ 23 : 18 ] He says, listen, I've told you all this stuff that your joy would be full. And he said, being saved is one of the most joyful things that can happen to a person. It came to you.

The church started and it stuck. It's not a phase. It's not a fad. You know, I think about our water containers, right? Our water containers nowadays. I know Pastor Trent has a personal vendetta against Stanley.

He's not a fan of them. Does anyone remember the phase of the Yeti, right? I don't know how many years ago it was the Yeti. Yetis are all the rage. And I think there was even a period of time where it's like, forget Yeti.

It's too expensive. We've got to get the Arctic ones, like R-T-I-C, right? There's that phase. And then now we're on the Stanley phase. And then someone's out there trying to dream up the next water container phase.

He says, your faith is not a phase like that, right? We're not moving on to something else. It's real and it made a difference. Reminder number three, your friends have not forgotten you. Your friends have not forgotten you.

[ 24 : 15 ] This is a huge theme in the book of 1 Thessalonians. And we see a few snippets of it in the first chapter, but we're going to explore this a whole lot more as we get into chapter two and chapter number three.

Do you notice in verse number two, how he wrote to them? He said, listen, we thank God for you. We're praying for you. We remember you. We know that you belong to the Lord in verse number four.

Even thinking for the Thessalonians to think back on the time that Paul came to town, they knew that Paul and Silas and their company, they paid a great personal price to come to them, right?

Because I don't know about you, but I don't like to be going from one place to the other. I like to get to a place and settle down a little bit and spend some time there.

You know, sometimes I think about our missionaries who are on deputation. They're traveling, going from one place to the other, and then, you know, furlough and this and moving around all the time. That is a real personal cost.

[ 25 : 15 ] It's nice to have your place that you go and sit down and have a cup of coffee and read a book. But to be in a state of going here and going there, that was Paul's life.

That was Silas' life. And the Thessalonians knew that these people loved them. And they were writing to remind him and saying, listen, we know you, we love you, and we're rejoicing at the difference that your faith has made.

You know, the comfort that God gives us, this is, there's so much more that should be explored here, but we don't have the time for it. Let me just give you these couple thoughts. The comfort that God gives us is not only doctrinal, but it's also relational.

Think about that for a second. The comfort that God wants to impart into your life is not just a series of truths. It is a series of truths, and truth matters so much.

But it's also relational. It's also relational because Paul is going to go on and teach these believers how to comfort one another. And that is one of the wonderful things about what we have here at our church is a body that God desires to use to strengthen and encourage and comfort one another.

[ 26 : 28 ] That's what the body does. That's why it matters to belong. That's why it matters to show up. I tell you, on Sunday, I missed very much being here. And sitting there watching the live stream, I was like, you know, I'd really rather be in that room with those people singing those songs and hearing that message.

Because in this body, in these relationships, in these friendships, it's unfortunate that a lot of times church has been known more as a place where you need to hide so you don't get hurt.

But in a church where people are loving Jesus and loving one another, comfort just flows throughout the building, throughout the body, is what I should say.

Because the church is not this building. We could go pick up and get another building and we would still be a church. It's relational. God not only gives us truth to stand upon, but he gives us people to stand beside.

And we're going to see that a whole bunch more as we go through 1 Thessalonians. Reminder number four. You are living out a God-given purpose. You're living out a God-given purpose. You see, what happens is that these people, they've heard the gospel, they've received the gospel, they're being reminded of Paul and Silas and Timothy's love and care for them, and they make note that these people have been fundamentally changed.

[ 27 : 49 ] Would you look with me at verse number six? It says, And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction and with joy of the Holy Ghost. We read through that, but I want to emphasize how they became followers.

That's your next blank. They became followers. And who are they following? Well, they're following God. They were also following us, which was Paul and Silas and Timothy.

You see, we understand following the Lord, right? He's perfect. He's worthy of our lives. He's worthy to be followed. But the other thing that is also amazing is that God gives us people to show us what it is to walk with Jesus.

And granted, we're all imperfect examples, but we can be used by God to help someone else know what it is to follow the Lord. There was a man that when I was a teenager named Paul Tackett, and before church, he would organize a group of men to get together and pray before the service.

And I tell you, that was one of those times, those five-minute sessions of getting together and praying before church, that taught me a lot about prayer as a 16-, 17-year-old kid.

[ 28 : 59 ] And that's what the Lord does. There's people that have been in your life who have helped you, that you've been a follower of them. There were also followers of the other churches in Jerusalem and in Judea.

We find that a little bit later on in the book. But they were not only followers, but they had followers. That's your next blank. They had followers. Would you look with me down to verse number 7 and verse number 8?

It's amazing that even in the short time that they were believers, they had become followers of Paul and of the Lord and of the churches in Judea. But they were in samples to all that believe in Macedonia.

In samples just means example. And when you get down to verse number 8, he says, Think about how encouraging those words are.

That this young church, right? Again, we think about all the backstory of Thessalonica. Even in a short time, he says, Your faith, the word of God, your lives have been examples.



[ 30 : 14 ] And there are other people who are looking at you in following your example. Now, what does this do for us? I think there's two responses that we should take away from this. Number one, we should be encouraged.

That's your next blank. Be encouraged. Be encouraged that all of this Christian stuff we do, it matters. It really matters. If you show up, if you walk with the Lord, if you serve the Lord, that matters because somebody is watching.

You're living out a God-given purpose. Even if you say, hey, I'm not doing a whole lot, you are living out a God-given purpose. Also, we need to be wise.

We need to be wise because people are watching your faith. If you're a parent, you've got kids that are watching your faith. If you're a friend, your friends are watching your faith.

If you are here in this church, there is somebody that is watching your faith. Where you work, people are watching your faith. It's a God-given purpose. So embrace it and be wise about it and lean into it.

[ 31 : 17 ] Finally, reminder number five, you have a risen and returning Savior. Let's read down to verses 9 and 10. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

This is the first place where he's pointing them upward. He's saying, look for the Son. Wait for the Son. And it's not so much like sitting in a waiting room of like, okay, one day this is going to happen.

It's anticipating. It's expecting. Because even in that day, they were looking for the imminent return of Jesus, that at any moment, he will appear in the air. He will take us to be with him for all of eternity.

And he said, that is what is going to encourage you and strengthen you and set you on the path that would please the Lord in your life. Because he's our Savior. Man, isn't that a good thing that he saved us?

He raised, God raised him up from the dead, proving that he has power over death. And not only did he save us, but he is going to deliver us from the wrath to come.

[ 32 : 38 ] And really, he has delivered us from the wrath to come. There's going to be a day when God's wrath is going to be poured out in a way that we can't even imagine. That's a real time.

That's a real event that is on God's calendar. And Jesus delivered you from that. Praise God for that. We have nothing but the best to come in the future.

There is to be with the Lord, to know the joy of heaven, to follow Jesus throughout dark days. Those are good things.

Those are things that God has granted us, has given us. And he's with us in all of it. And so, friends, let these truths stabilize, steady your heart.

And, you know, it might be that this evening, you know, even in a group of any size, in a group of this size, there might be one that you are not delivered from the wrath of God. I challenge you tonight, do not put that off, because that's a very real thing.

[ 33 : 42 ] And Jesus, he will deliver you if you'll come to him in faith. So, let me ask you this. Of those five reminders, what is God using to help your heart tonight?

We're going to pray and we're going to close out. I apologize, we're a few minutes past. What, would you let the truth of God stabilize your heart? And this is a bonus one, but I think it is just important. If you are in, if you're doing well, praise God.

If you are struggling a little bit, will you let God bring somebody into your life to comfort and to encourage you? That is a method of helping us that God has given.

That's why we're here in a body. And it's a little bit scary sometimes to open up and just to know even what to say. And you might fumble through like, hey, I want to talk to you about something. I'm just having a hard time, right?

But I believe if you do that, there are people, there are people in this place that God will use to help you. Open up to somebody.

[ 34 : 46 ] Let's pray. Father, we come to you this evening and it is so good to open your word together with these people. Lord, I thank you for the people that you've put in my life. I thank you for so many in this room that have been an encouragement and a help and a comfort to me.

And God, I pray that your word would find a place in our hearts, that we would allow truth to steady us, that we'd allow truth to help us, and that we would allow our brothers and sisters in Christ to comfort us and to help us as well.

Lord, you knew what you were doing when you put the church together. It's a wonderful thing that for thousands of years, believers have gathered together, waiting for you, looking for you, serving you with their lives.

Lord, help us to keep our focus upon you and upon your son. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.