

1 and 2 Thessalonians

Greetings and Thanksgiving

Interpreting the Text:

1. It is believed that 1 Thessalonians may be the oldest, undisputed letter of Paul's that we have in our Bible. What stands out in this first chapter that may indicate that Paul is somewhat early in his ministerial career?
2. Paul expresses gratitude to his letter's recipients and then goes on to provide feedback and further instructions. Do you think this was just the format for letters written in this time, or does Paul have a motive or strategy here?

Applying the Text:

1. What conventions do you use when addressing people either in person, by letter or by some modern electronic system of communication? How do you attend to the emotional impact of what you say? Do you see Paul working in any analogous way with his Thessalonian congregation?
2. Paul stresses the importance of being "imitators of Christ" (1:6-7). Are there people in your life to whom you look as models of either behavior or faith? Are there ways in which you try to serve as a model for others to imitate?
3. Paul addresses the congregation at Thessalonica as being "chosen by God" (1:4-5). Do you have a sense that as members of a Christian congregation you have been "chosen" or "elect"? What are the implications of that belief?