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March 2018

# THE BOOK OF THESSALONIANS

*Inside Terry's Office:*

## *1 Thessalonians - Those Wonderfully Selfish Thessalonians!*

I believe that 'selfish' is a positive spiritual term! No, not 'self-centered' or 'self-absorbed'. Yet, to selfishly pursue that we believe in ('faith'), what we are properly emotionally invested in ('love'), and what we want most for ourselves ('hope') is biblical and Christ-like! Therefore, Paul begins his letter to the Thessalonians praising their selfishness:

*"We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Because we believe that God loves us and has a plan for us that is more wonderful than any plans we can make for ourselves; our faith produces works. Because we love all the aspects of who God is we share in His labors. Because all our highest and best is found in Christ Jesus we persevere through trials, tribulations and temptations. Because of our selfishness we will cling to the one who loves us best!

Most of those who seek counseling are doing so because they believe they have feelings, attitudes, and/or behaviors that ultimately do not reflect their true heart; Their faith, hope, and love. Their temporary desires, their circumstances, their relationships, and Satan are working to distance them from a path forward toward their heart's desire. Their mis-beliefs about themselves, God, others, and the world conspire to lock them away from God's plan for them. In short, THEY ARE A BATTLEFIELD upon which the selfish desires of their heart (soul) and the selfish desires of their flesh engage each other within their own psyche (soul).

You see, one selfishness wars against another; one – the selfishness of faith, hope, and love: the other – the selfishness of flesh, mis-belief, and unbelief.

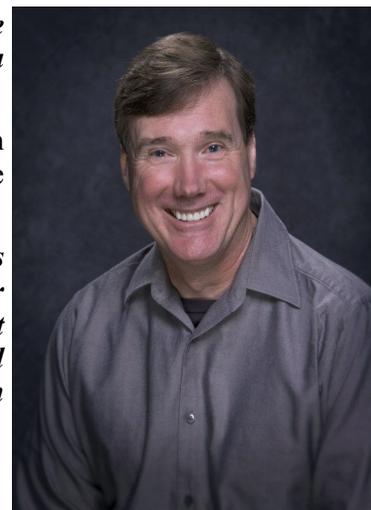
It does not help to challenge ourselves and others to unselfishness. In doing so, we are engaging the world on its' own 'performance-based' terms. We endeavor to direct ourselves and others to the comforting Holy Spirit, the love of a Savior, and the plans of a Father! ... He has begun a good work within us and will be faithful to complete it! ... He has prepared works for our hands! ... He offers the beatitudes (blessings) that are truly fulfilling!

Therefore, Paul can honestly note: *"You became imitators of us and of the Lord: in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia."* I Thess. 1: 6&7

As we selfishly embrace the goodness of our God, I can proclaim the same benediction over you that Paul proclaimed over the Thessalonians;

*"Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus Christ clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."* I Thess. 3:11 – 13

In His Grip, TWE



ESTABLISHING A PLUMBLINE IN THE HEART OF GOD'S PEOPLE

# The Plumbline

## ***Thessalonians and Spiritual Maturity***

***O brothers and sisters loved by God, we know He has chosen you. And here is why: what you experienced in the good news we brought you was more than words channeling down your ears; it came to you as a life-empowering, Spirit-infused message that offers complete hope and assurance! You took to heart the word we taught with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, even in the face of trouble.***

*The Voice, I Thessalonians 1:4-6*

In the Fifty Second "Love Letter" (66 Love Letters) Larry Crabb writes about this message on *spiritual maturity*: "You're expecting richer experiences of nearness to Me. But in this life I more often provide a deepened thirst for Me, a thirst that strengthens you to more consistently turn away from immediately compelling satisfaction, a thirst that keeps you engaged with My purposes in this disappointing world, a thirst that surpasses your desire for what nothing in this life can provide. That's maturity." . . . "Your weariness requires the strength of supernatural love to continue serving Me." (p. 278-279, 66 Love Letters)

The followers in Thessalonica were less than a year old in their Christian life when Paul wrote this letter. The news of these young Christians' faith in the midst of temptations and trials buoyed a very

battle-wearied Paul. What kept Paul focused toward the Lord was his confidence that the Lord would one day return. Paul was hopeful and the report he learned from Timothy [3:5] was that the Thessalonica followers were also motivated to move forward by the Son's appearing. They had indeed ***"taken to heart the word we taught with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, even in the face of trouble."***

Nothing pleases a teacher more than to see their student apply what they have been taught! The same is true of a parent and child and a counselor and a counselee. Not long ago a counselee came back and reported to me something they had learned from me that they had passed on to their neighbor. They comforted with the comfort they had received [2 Corinthians 1:3-5]. Sometimes I will have a counselee come back and say I remember what you said when. . . .and I honestly cannot remember having said what they said I said! That really excites me even more because I know it had to be a Spirit inspired thought edifying for the need of the moment!

These are very satisfying and affirming occurrences that do happen and like it was with Paul it is so encouraging and motivational. I think what also impresses me, however, is that the ***good news comes as a life-empowering, life-infused message*** which reminds me that the message being received is not up to me. In other words, the receiving is not my job. Am I encouraged when I see evidence that the message has been received? YES! Am I discouraged when I see no evidence the receiver, "got it?"

Yes, but if I know the message is from God, then my confidence is in God, not in me.

There is a parable that I feel clearly illustrates this process that our pastor reviewed recently, the Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:1-23. The parable is that God is like a farmer and a sower, spreading the message of the kingdom. Some will receive and others will not receive. Pastor pointed out that the consistent one in the story is the sower and the seed is consistent to all. It is the condition of the soil, the receiver, that changes. God is at work in us motivating us to spread "the message." Our job is to spread the seed, not to bring growth. We can trust the results then to God knowing that he is not going to give up!

May we all be like these young believers of Thessalonica who received the word, believed it, absorbed it and lived it out in the face of trouble!

***Carol Anne***





## *The Greatest Human Needs*

Have you ever experienced a season in life where it seems like God is trying to get your attention about something? And maybe that looks like you seeing or hearing the same message over and over again? Everywhere you go, there it is. Everyone you see, is saying the same thing. Everything you read, all says the same thing. I don't know if it's because I am thinking about this "theme" so much that I see it more or if because I am seeing it more, it is starting to have more impact on me! Either way, I have been in one of these seasons as of late.

In my desire to continue to learn how to improve my counseling, I have found a psychologist who has some very interesting ideas about relational dynamics. As I began to go through some of their materials, I came across a teaching that really made me stop and think. They made the statement that the two greatest human needs are connection and meaning. Connection and meaning? Really? Is that right? As I pondered this notion for a couple of weeks, I went to church and the pastor began talking about how God had wired us specifically for two things—belonging and significance! Wow, there it was again. More and more I began seeing this notion of connection and meaning playing out all around me. In my own life, I struggle with knowing where I fit in, where am I connected, where do I belong. As well as, does my life matter? What is my purpose here? Will I make a difference?

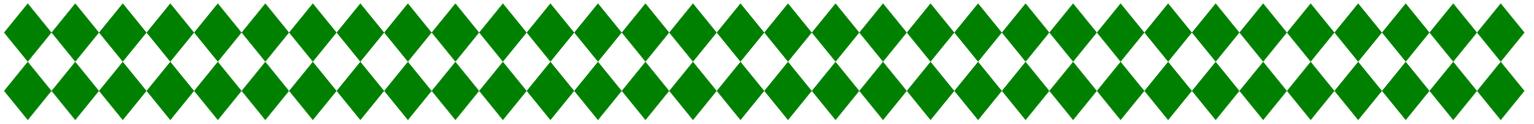
Then I read I Thessalonians! And all I could see was the connections between Paul and the people of Thessalonica. The joy he felt when he thought of them. How much he enjoyed them. There was an obvious deep sense of connection between them. In chapter 2, Paul writes things like "having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face." (v 17) and "for who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you." (v 19) and "for you are our glory and joy." (v 20). The connection was so deep that not even physical distance could break it. When we can experience this type of connections, there is something deeply profound that happens to us. We experience peace! But this is only part of the equation. Paul was secure in his identity. He could keep his 51% between him and God! Yet there is a sense of great joy, much like a father feels when their kids are carrying on things that he has taught them. There is the sense of legacy, significance, and meaning. Paul takes many opportunities to call out the good things that they have adopted. They were good imitators of the Lord, received the word in much tribulation, and became examples to all the believers. Whether you are a parent, teacher, or mentor, there is just something unique that happens when the other person "gets" it. It's the meaning part I have just made and the impact on this person's life. There is no other feeling quite like it.

Unfortunately, with these innate needs, there are opportunities for twisting them. When we search for meaning without the connections, we can easily fall in to the trap of self-centeredness. I want to have significance and meaning, but may think I have to do it all on my own. Narcissism is the pit of trying to have significance without connections. We can also try to have connections without meaning. When we have no sense of purpose, vision, or identity, we will look to others to meet that need. Losing our sense of self, we cannot maintain healthy emotional investments. Codependency is the ditch of connections without meaning.

God has created us in His image. His image is that of connection and meaning. We are not meant to be lone rangers! We were created for community and in that community we can also experience significance and meaning. Lord, help us to learn how to live that out!

*Anthony Elliott*

***Be who you want to be!***



## ***PLUMBLINE CLASSROOM TRANSFORMATION PROJECT***

The Classroom Transformation Project is just one of the projects we are currently working toward at Plumblime.

### ***What is the Classroom Transformation Project?***

**OUR VISION:** To transform the existing classroom into a warm and welcoming living room type environment to allow class members to feel comfortable, encouraging emotional growth.

**REQUIREMENTS:** This project will include pain, lighting, upgrades to the wall décor, adding a pass through bar counter in the kitchen, window treatments, transform the floor coverings, and furniture upgrades at a minimum.

**BUDGET:** The overall budget for this project is \$15,000 to include all items.

**TIMELINE:** Once the funds have been acquired, the project will be scheduled and completed.

**ASKING:** We are seeking donations to assist us in completing this Classroom Transformation Project.

**VOLUNTEERS:** Additional ways to assist will be by volunteering your time and expertise when the actual work begins.

***Would you partner with us for this project?***

Donations can be sent to Plumblime Ministries, Inc. [8222 E 103rd Street, Tulsa, OK 74133](https://www.plumblime.org).

***All donations are Tax Deductible.***

# Stickman's Prayers

Plumblin's newest book, *Stickman's Prayers* has been published and is now available at Plumblin!

## stickman's prayers

the everyday practice of  
"loosing prayers"  
and the ministry of  
"exploratory prayers"



Michelle Carpenter  
Terry Ewing  
Erin Garcia  
Margo Hanne  
Carolyn Knippers  
Carol McNamarra  
Sue Merrill

Would you be surprised to know that the "Prayer of Jabez" was a joke?

Would you be happy to know what kind of prayers are appropriate for you to pray for yourself and what kinds are meant for you to pray for others and others for you?

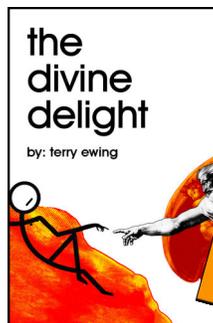
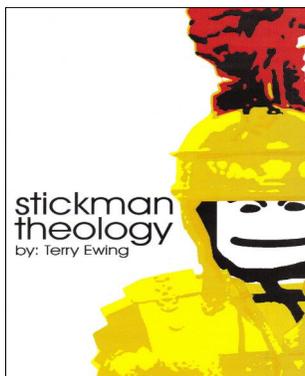
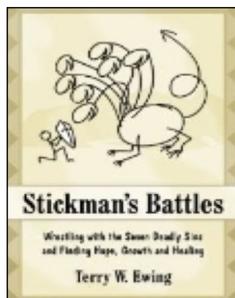
Would you like confidence and freedom to simply enjoy your personal and ministry prayers?

Praying is the most natural thing in the world for Christians; an on going conversation with our best friend, counselor, and confidant; gratitude to our Savior and provider; intercession on behalf of our friends; requests to our Creator. In this regard, a book on prayer may seem presumptuous. When you write a book on Prayer aren't you suggesting that some are praying wrongly, or, at least could be praying better?

That really is not the kind of message we look to promote. So...why the book?

The *Stickman's Prayers* serves two purposes. First, to challenge some ideas that other teaching and preaching concerning prayer has promoted. And, to offer simple encouragements to personal prayer and prayer ministries.

Available at Plumblin for a suggested donation of \$10.00 each



*Did you know you can download*

## Stickman Theology

**On your KINDLE?**

Did you know that when you shop on Amazon, you could be helping to financially support Plumblin? Through the Amazon smiles program, **Amazon will donate a portion of the sales to Plumblin.** All you need to do is go to [smiles.amazon.com](https://smiles.amazon.com), designate Plumblin Ministries, and start shopping! Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the total sales price to Plumblin. Please remember to bookmark that page and you can help us as you shop!

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