

*Parental Anxiety*  
Sunday School Lesson  
I Thessalonians 3  
February 1, 2026

Do you remember the first time you dropped one of your children off at college? I do. My son chose to go to Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, an eleven-hour drive from Little Rock. We had done the early packing and making sure he had a cellphone, a laptop, and a printer. It was an easy drive up there but on move-in day, we went to Target to get last minute things and I lost it in the middle of the store. I cried the whole time we unpacked the car and cried all the way home to Little Rock, stopping only to eat and get some lotion for my eyes which were getting chapped from all the crying. I repeated it the next year taking Lauren to Exeter and the next year taking Elizabeth to Boston. Separations are hard!

Many parents have those anxieties when taking their children to preschool or summer camp or kindergarten for the first time. As the author reminds us, we as parents work to make our children independent and then when they exercise their independence, we are unprepared for the challenges it presents to us. In Thessalonians, we can understand how Paul must be feeling. For a while, he was close by and could help them through tough days and situations. They were dealing with unexpected suffering and of course, he wanted to run and support them but his presence would only make matters worse. Instead, he sent Timothy in his place, trusting that Timothy could help them through the situation they were facing.

In this third chapter, Paul has heard back from Timothy and knows the church is weathering the storm. Imagine how relieved he must have felt. He extends more encouraging words to build up the church and strengthen their ability to persevere.

**Purpose Statement: To develop the habit of praising and encouraging others.**

As a parent, we are all familiar with trying to help our children from a distance. Whether they are at summer camp, college, or visiting out of state relatives, we often remind them that they already know how to solve a problem. We may tell a story of how they have resolved a similar problem in the past or we might recall a situation where they have reacted with compassion and conviction and changed the outcome for the better. The truth is that we have been teaching them right from wrong, we have been teaching how to respond with grace, and we have been teaching our children how to face adversity since the day they were born. Sometimes stress make us forget what we know and someone comes along with the right words of encouragement and we remember. It clears up the picture and suddenly, we know what we are called to do.

Paul also reminds the people of who they are. They are not the church that bickers and they are not the church that gets enamored with charismatic speakers who are manipulating folks to get power for themselves. These are genuine disciples who are no longer just imitating Christ; they are living examples of holy living.

## **Moving to Love**

Somewhere along the way, these believers took the way of Christ into their hearts. It changed how they saw themselves and changed how they spoke and responded to others. It moved them to genuine love of God, neighbor, and self. The key was the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Look at how the Gospels present the disciples. Jesus intentionally calls each of them and all of them were confused about the role of Jesus in the Kingdom of God. They misunderstood the kind of Redeemer Jesus would be and they misunderstood the king of Kingdom Jesus was establishing. They like many of us, had trouble seeing beyond their own history.

Their history of having a Kingdom was built around having power over others. Their understand of King was a charismatic leader who could overthrow Roman and re-establish Israel as a prominent nation. If you look at the Christian nationalism movement in America today, you will see the same overtones. But that was not who Jesus was nor was it the kingdom to be established. Jesus would not overwhelm people with charisma or mighty armies of angels. God's intent was not to have one group of people ruling over another group of people. This new kingdom would be a Kingdom with the same values as God – justice for all people, love for all peoples, grace and forgiveness in abundance. It is a kingdom where every life is valued and beloved. It is under the Lordship of Jesus. We will do things God's way and not answer to the whims of whatever person holds political power. The disciples had a difficult time understanding this and I think we do as well. The church at Thessalonica was genuinely trying to live God's way.

## **Timothy**

Paul sent the best person he knew back to Thessalonica – Timothy. We know how much Paul treasured Timothy but he also knew that any message Timothy relayed to the people in Thessalonica, they would understand to be genuine because of Paul's trust in Timothy. Paul wanted people to know that he was praying for them and lifting them up even though he could not come at this time. Our lesson emphasizes how we keep in touch to let members know they are still important even when they become homebound.

Sending Timothy also strengthened Timothy's faith and experience as a future leader. This has made programs such as Ozark Mission Project so successful. You have given people an opportunity to lead and learn. You can send a future pastor to college and seminary but hands on experience is often the best teacher and the best encourager.

Let us pray:

**Loving God, help us encourage our relationships and seek new ones that will bring you glory. Encourage us to wait actively by sharing your Son with others; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**