

Mystic



✔ Prepare in Advance

- Gather pens and paper or note cards.
- Prepare the *Bible Background Video* ready to view.

✔ Growing in Life Together

Show the *Bible Background Video*

SAY: In today's text, Paul sounds like he is doing an examen prayer or a personal reflection on his time with the Thessalonians. He reviews his internal motives, external actions, thoughts and feelings in front of God and this church. To do so suggests an intimacy between Paul and the group.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8. Next, invite each group member to read the text aloud as if he/she was Paul speaking the words.

✔ DISCUSS

- What does Paul need/want from the Thessalonians?
- What do you think is the motivation behind these shared words?
- What is Paul risking in this vulnerable revelation of his thoughts?
- If you were in this Thessalonian church, how would you receive Paul's words?
- What would you say in response to Paul?

✔ GROUP EXAMEN

Say: It can be hard to be vulnerable with each other, but in a fellowship of Christians, we are invited to grow in our interdependence and intimacy with each other and God.

Invite people to a time of group examen prayer where "we look prayerfully with God at our group life."

Spend a few silent moments acknowledging God's presence in the group, and opening to God's input in the reflection.

Invite people to write their responses to the reflection prompts that follow.

- Think about our group's experiences together. Jot down five adjectives that describe our group.
- Review our group life. List 7-8 activities that we have shared in the past three months. Include specific meetings, prayers, conversations, actions, etc.

- Reflect on your list of adjectives and activities, without making any judgment or ignoring any feelings or explaining any occurrence. Jot down the thoughts and/or questions that come to mind.
- Consider the questions: What is it like for you to be part of our group?
- Is there anything you want to thank God for?
- Is there anything you want to confess – any perceived faults on your part?
- Is there anything you sense God would like to develop/change about our group? Where has God's presence been felt in our group? What do you sense God is doing within our group life?

Invite group members to share their reflections with each other (note to leader: be sure to create a safe space for sharing – call people to confidentiality and to good listening as they offer their thoughts to one another.)

✔ PRAYER

Invite people to offer sentence prayers to God for their continuing group life together.

By Joy Yee

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