

Steady Under Stress

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

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Pastor Daniel Fusco

Unstoppable Hope

Reflect

Outline: Recap

Realize

Points to Ponder

Respond

Questions to draw out understanding.

REFLECT

We all know it — we live in times of uncertainty, and it can feel totally overwhelming sometimes. The beautiful thing is, nothing surprises God, and no matter what goes on, he invites us all to walk in a unique hope that's unstoppable. God leverages the worst situations to bring about the most extraordinary things! Because we know that's part of who God is, we can expect good things from his hand, good outcomes from situations we can't predict otherwise. Join us for this special new series, Unstoppable Hope: Fail-Proof Faith for Uncertain Times!

[LINK to SMALL GROUP VIDEO MATERIALS](#)

REALIZE

1. Have a faith that works.

- **1 Thessalonians 1:2-4**
- **Leader Notes**
 - In times of stress and uncertainty, we need to have a faith that works. According to Paul, that includes praising God, no matter what is going on in the world around us...and then getting to work. Part of that work is to pray on behalf of other people.
 - The Bible is clear: nobody is saved by works, but we are saved unto works. We are saved, and then God wants us to accomplish unique good works he created us to do!
 - If we really trust God is who he says he is, then we have nothing to fear. We can walk out our faith, instead of forgetting our faith, which is what we often do in times of stress. (Think of the story of Peter walking on the water)! In times of uncertainty, it's easy to take our eyes off the God who has saved our souls. We don't need to be blind to what's happening in the world, but we do need to trust God in the midst of it all.
- **Describe something you're walking through right now that makes you feel uncertain and maybe afraid. How can you trust who God is, even if you don't know the outcome of your circumstances? What do you need to take your eyes off of, so that you can fix your eyes on Jesus?**

2. Choose to labor in love.

- **1 Thessalonians 1:3**
- **Leader Notes**
 - Our lives need to be lived out in an active way where we are displaying love self-sacrificially. In fact, real love is self-sacrificial by definition. If love is not self-sacrificial, it is selfish, and it becomes something other than love at that point.

- Especially in times of uncertainty, believers have an amazing opportunity to step into places no one else is willing or able to go. Because we know *real* love, the ultimate example of self-sacrificial love (the sacrifice of Jesus), we are best equipped to step into the gaps in the hardest times with a holy love. It's an amazing way to witness to a dying world!
- **Describe a time someone showed you truly self-sacrificial love. What is one practical way you can labor in self-sacrificial love today for someone else?**

3. Always continue to hope.

- **1 Thessalonians 1:3**
- **Leader Notes**
 - Hope can be defined by this acronym: Having Only Positive Expectations. That's not just positive thinking! It's something we continue in with patience and steadfastness because we know we believe in a God of redemption and resurrection, who works all things together for good for his purposes.
 - There's no waste in God's kingdom. He leverages the worst situations to bring the most extraordinary things out of it. Because we know that's part of who God is, we can expect good things from his hand, good outcomes from situations we can't predict otherwise.
 - Because we can always choose hope, we can praise God in the midst of tribulations! That's the ultimate steadiness in stressful seasons.
 - God uses tribulations to produce steadfastness and character, which creates hope in our hearts. That in itself is a source of hope! If we press into Jesus in the midst of stressful times, he promises to bear fruit in our lives. Hope, then, is a choice we make given the reality of who Jesus is, and who we are in Christ.
- **What does hope look like for you, today? Where have you neglected to hope in God in uncertain times? How can you have positive expectations in the midst of what you're going through right now?**

Optional Follow-up Questions:

- What makes you say that?
- How do you feel about that?
- How would you explain your answer to a non-Christian friend or neighbor?
- Why did God design it to work that way? Why not just do (whatever else) instead?
- What would you say to someone who disagrees with that?
- Why do we really have to do it like that? Why can't we just go (some other route) instead?