*O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord; bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples. For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be revered above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts. Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before Him, all the earth.* Psalm 96:1-9

*Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters, beloved by God, that He has chosen you, because our message of the Gospel came to you not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons, we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy from the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For they report about us what kind of welcome we had among you and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.* 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

*After hearing a great sermon on lifestyle evangelism, a family decided to invite their neighbors to dinner to show them the Christian standards in their home.*

*At the table dad asked their little 5-year-old Johnny to say grace.*

*Little Johnny was a bit shy: "I don't know what to say" There was an awkward pause, followed by a reassuring smile from the boy's mother: "Well darling," she said, " just say what Daddy said at breakfast this morning."*

*The boy then repeated: "Oh God, why have we got those awful people coming to dinner tonight.”*

God Is At Work With Your Life

1. The greatest obstacle in reaching with the Gospel to the people of our times is that to the society, thanks to the educational systems on every level and on the political push to remove any reference to God and faith from the public life, God has become irrelevant. We are probably the last generation that grew up with the Bible as one of the literary texts used in the public education. Even if many people of our generation did not accept the Scriptures as the Word of God, they at least had some understanding of them and the values that the Bible teaches. Removing the Bible from the curriculums of literature equaled to studying Shakespeare without reading any of his works. Today, the Bible is perceived as an ancient text of the history long gone. Christianity has become not a vital and pulsating religion, but became one of many forms of the *“deity worship.”* We may not like this, but this is the reality of our modern world, world that we have created. Yet, as the Church, in this world, we are still very much present and we are still very much influenced by what we believe and where we stand for.

2. Paul’s letter allows us to realize that we are not alone and that we have an incredible support network that helps us to see the Gospel not as the old text, but as a very much alive and relevant manuscript. The Bible, after all is the story of God and of His love for humankind and it is a very relevant message in today’s lost world. There is however one important factor. If we accept the Bible as a relevant and important book, we must make it also relevant to the contemporary world. The vast majority of Americans, when asked whether they believe in God or not, will respond with overwhelming *“yes,”* but at the same time, the majority of people see God as a part of the religious ritual that belongs in the place of worship, not in practical life. It is not enough however, to speak about the majesty and the glory of God only, He must dwell in the human heart and He must be recognized as the One who influences our lives. God loved us so much that He has given His only Son to die for our sins, and for what He has done, He must become our personal God, not a God of a ritual, a God of the knowledge of the religious rites, a God of a liturgy and the worship service.

3. God who dwells in the heart of a believer is a powerful God. He is ever present and ever responding. He is God who promised to never leave us and the One who fully understands us. He is God who became a man, in order to feel, to experience and to suffer as any human being would. In this, He is different from the gods who were *“man-made”* and who were elevated to the position of the deity because of human need to serve a deity. Our God is very much interested in what is happening to us, and what our life is like. He created the world, and although He gave this world to us, His creation, He did not leave us alone to do what we want and how we want. He is within us and helps us to work this world according to His will. Working within us God allows us to see our mistakes and helps us to restore our shattered lives. He opens His arms to us in moments of our failures and helps us to learn from the mistakes of the past. He convicts us of our sins and allows us to grow spiritually when we allow Him to take control of our lives. Through Jesus Christ we are able to adapt to many different circumstances of our daily life. The Bible as a book carries a lot of rules and regulations that may help us in many circumstances, but only Jesus Christ allows us to act according to the spirit of these rules rather than to the letter of them. We only have to embrace Him.

4. Working with us, God allows us to see our mistakes and He helps us to restore our shattered lives. He opens His arms in the moments of our failures, and helps us to learn from the mistakes of the past. He convicts us of our sins and allows us to grow spiritually, when we allow Him to take control of our lives. Through Jesus Christ we are able to adapt to many different circumstances of daily life. The Bible, as a book, carries a lot of rules and regulations that may help us in many circumstances, but only Jesus Christ allows us to act according to the spirit of these rules rather than to the letter of them. Every day we must make decisions. No matter how hard we try to see all the angles of the decisions we make, we will always miss at least one. The God’s angle. He is always impartial, and He is always right. We may not like this as humans, because we tend to believe that we indeed are the most knowledgeable of the creatures in the universe, nevertheless, it is only God who truly has all the answers.

5. Whatever we know, whatever we learned, whatever discoveries we made, all of them were, are and will be, possible only because God shapes our intelligence and gives us the knowledge. We have nothing that we may call our own. Countless number of scientists begun their scientific search prompted by the human arrogance, only to eventually recognize with humility that this is God who is behind all of the discoveries they made. The greatest, and the most important thing in our life comes to us from Jesus Christ who teaches us and who shapes us with the help of the Holy Spirit. When God works in us and through us, this leads us to be able to say, just as Matthew wrote: *“...well done, good and faithful servant!”* (Mt. 25:23) Unfortunately, I heard many politicians, including the president of the USA and even the Church leaders, who, although claiming to be the devout Christians, through their actions negated what the Christian faith and what being a Christian is all about. No matter who we are, we cannot separate God from our lives and from our actions.

6. God works within us. Through His works we are able to experience, to grow and to learn what His purpose for us is. Because of the constant presence of the Holy Spirit, we are not alone. The promise that God has given us assures us that He will continue working within us. As Christians we do not try to do our best, but we endeavor to work together with God. The presence of a personal Savior means that we are connected to Him as individuals, not as a nation, nor a family or even a church member. When we accepted Jesus as our Savior, we allowed Him to work with us in controlling our life. Yes, we fail, we are not perfect, we make mistakes, but all of these are forgiven by our loving God if we come to Him asking for forgiveness and help. It might take a time sometimes to learn the lesson, but ultimately our God is a loving, forgiving God.

7. Today, many people speak of Christ as “a god,” but they lack to recognizing Him as *“The Only God.”* People see Him as someone from the past, someone immaterial, someone whose influence and importance is no more, and consequently they lack of His guidance. The world however still needs God, because as humanity, as the species, we are unable to *“evolve”* into a better creation. The reality of the world and its affairs proves this. So, here we are, the followers of Jesus. With our personal knowledge of Him, with personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we are able to present Him in a relevant and meaningful way. We cannot accept the *“status quo.”* This is what I believe Paul wants us to realize, just as he wanted the Church in Thessaloniki to realize, after all, the Church of his days was just being establishing and the world of the 1st century needed to know God. Just as the *“neo-pagan”* 21st century world needs.