



1&2 Thessalonians

Written by: Carla Freeman
June Michealsen

INTRODUCTION

Paul, along with Timothy and Silas, helped establish the Thessalonian church on the second missionary journey. When they were forced to flee Thessalonica, they left a body of believers facing persecution. Wrenched too soon from beloved new friends, they sent letters back to them.

The Thessalonian letters, among the earliest in the New Testament, are filled with loving encouragement. Paul commends the young church for standing firm in the face of adversity. He commends their reputation for love and faithfulness. He urges them to continue in that.

Paul's letters present the hope of Christ's return with teaching about the end times. God's people will be delivered and the wicked will be judged. God's victory over evil will be complete. No one is to get tired of doing what is right as they wait for that day.

Paul reminds his readers that the community of the beloved Savior is worth working in and working for. The Lord Jesus Christ himself is the one who is able to encourage hearts and strengthen people in all times and all places to choose a life of purity and passion in Him.

LESSON ONE: Setting the Stage for the study of Thessalonians.

OPENING QUESTION: *Share an experience of being part of a team.*

Note: 1 Thessalonians is believed to be one of Paul's earliest letters, written about 50 A.D. to a largely gentile church.

The letter was written by Paul himself, even though he includes his teammates Silas and Timothy out of respect for their partnership.

Thessalonica was the capital and largest city of the Roman province of Macedonia. It was an important seaport and trade center with abundant idol worship and pagan morality. It was located on the *Ignatian Way* which was a road connecting East and West.

Today with its one million inhabitants it is the capital of the Macedonian region of Greece known as Saloniki or Thessaloniki.

Read through 1Thessalonians in one sitting.

1. List major themes.

2. What words or phrases are repeated?

3. How does Paul's letter express a pastor's heart?

4. Describe Paul's teammates. Why did Paul invite them to serve with him?

Silas

Act 15:36-41

1Peter 5:12

Timothy

Acts 16:1-3

2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15

5. Why do you think it was important for Paul to have these partners?
(See also Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

Read Acts 16:6-10 and Acts 17:1-15

6. Why did Paul and his companions travel to Macedonia, the region in which Thessalonica was located? Acts 16:6-10
7. Why did Paul and his companions leave Thessalonica? What did they leave behind?
Acts 17:1-15
8. Knowing the background of Paul's initial visit to Thessalonica, what do you find surprising in the tone of his letter?

Memory Verse: "We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers."
1 Thessalonians 1:2

Prayer Guide: Teach me Lord.

LESSON TWO: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

OPENING QUESTION: *Describe a letter you have kept and continue to treasure.*

Note: At the time Paul wrote this letter the church in Thessalonica was only a few months old and undergoing severe persecution.

The Greek word for “church” means “an assembly” that can be either religious or secular. Christ’s church is unique because its members belong to God.

1. What evidences of living faith did Paul observe in the Thessalonians? v.3
2. List the life-changing ways in which the gospel came to the Thessalonian church. v.5
3. What did the Thessalonians turn from in order to receive the gospel and become God's chosen people?
4. **Read 1 Peter 2:9-12.** What new identity do God's chosen people receive?

5. Who did the Thessalonians imitate? v.6

6. Who are you to imitate?

Ephesians 5:1-2

3 John 11

7. What do you value deeply that you long to see others imitate?

8. What was the reputation of the Thessalonian church? How did they impact the region around them?

9. How might God use your reputation to impact those in your sphere of influence?

Memory Verse: "We 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." *1 Thessalonians 1:3*

Prayer Guide: Father grow me in faith, hope and love.

LESSON THREE: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

OPENING QUESTION: *What practice have you have built into your life that keeps you healthy?*

1. What difficulty had Paul and his friends suffered? v.2, (see also Acts 16:22-24)
2. What allowed them to continue sharing the gospel?
3. Why do you think Paul took the time to defend his ministry in his letter to the Thessalonians?
4. What did Paul and his friends **not** do in their ministry?
 - v. 3
 - v.4
 - v.5
 - v.6
5. Why did the healthy growth of a young church require that these behaviors be eliminated?

6. What did Paul and his friends **do** in their ministry?

v.7

v.8

v.9

v.10

vv.11-12

7. Which of these practices would strengthen your service?

8. **Read Psalm 139:23-24.** Reflect on your own motives in ministry.

9. How did the Thessalonians judge Paul's motives as revealed by their response to the gospel ? v.13

10. What hostility did the church face?

Note: Paul, a Jew and former persecutor of Christians himself, had strong words about the Jews in verses 14-16. They are not an antisemitic statement but a theological comment on Jews who rejected the gospel and made every effort to stop its spread.

11. Reread v.8. Who do you love enough to share the gospel and your life with?

Memory Verse: "...We loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."
1 Thessalonians 2:8

Prayer Guide: Lord, increase my love.

LESSON FOUR: 1Thessalonians 2:17 – 3:13

OPENING QUESTION: *Have you had a visit from someone recently who brought you joy?*

1. What was the reason for Paul's prolonged separation from the new converts in Thessalonica? 1 Thess. 2:17-18, (see also Acts 17:1-9)
2. Why did Paul long to see the Thessalonians? What hindered him from doing so? 1Thess. 2:18
3. What resources can help overcome such hindrance? Ephesians 6:10-18
4. List the reasons Timothy was sent to visit the Thessalonians. What might have been some of the concerns Paul had for the new converts in Thessalonica? 1 Thess.3:2-5, (see also Luke 8:11-15, 1 Peter 5:8)
5. What difference can it make to visit someone in person? Is there someone God might nudge you to reconnect with?

6. What good news did Timothy bring from Thessalonica? 1 Thess. 3:6

7. What phrases in this chapter express Paul's deep love for the Thessalonians?

8. How would you help "supply what is lacking" in another's faith as Paul yearned to do with the Thessalonians?

9. Rewrite and pray 1Thessalonians 3:12-13.
 - Write it as a prayer for yourself.

 - Write it as a prayer for someone else.

Memory Verse: "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." *1Thessalonians 3:13*

Prayer Guide: Lord, help me stand firm.

LESSON FIVE: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 and 5:12-28

OPENING QUESTION: *What help have you received from a coach or mentor?*

Note: In chapter 4 and 5 Paul moves from reflections of past events to address the practical problems facing the Thessalonian church.

Sexual practices in pagan Thessalonica differed from the ethical standards of Christianity and threatened the unity and purity of the early church.

Sanctification (hagiasmos) means being set apart and dedicated to God.

1. Why did Paul instruct the Thessalonians how to live? 1 Thess. 4:1-2
(see also 1 John 3:1-3)

2. How are believers to honor God with their bodies?

1 Thess. 4:3-8

1 Corinthians. 6:18-20

Romans 13:8-14

Romans 12:1-3

3. Why does sexual purity remain such a challenge today?
4. How were their daily lives to gain the respect of outsiders? 1 Thess. 4:11-12

In what ways are you shaping your life to gain the respect of outsiders?

5. What role did work play in their lives?

1 Thess. 4:11

1 Thess. 5:12-13

1 Thess. 5:14a

6. How does a work ethic either detract or contribute to the witness of a person's faith?

Proverbs 6:6-11

Colossians 3:23-24

7. List the instructions Paul gave to promote health in the body of Christ.

1 Thess. 5:12-22

Why do these remain important today?

8. **Read Ephesians 2:19-22.** What has God done to make unity in his body possible? What assurance does that provide?

9. What would allow the Thessalonians to hold on to the good? 1 Thess. 5:19-24

What allows you to hold on to the good?

Memory Verse: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Prayer Guide: Lord, sanctify me through and through.

LESSON SIX: 1 Thessalonians 4:13 -5:11

OPENING QUESTION: *What has shaped your ideas about death?*

Note: “The Day of the Lord” is a day of judgment for God’s opponents and a day of deliverance for God’s people. (NIV)

Throughout Scripture *trumpets* declared war, announced special times and seasons and called people to action.

1. In the face of death how are Christians to grieve differently from pagans? 1 Thess. 4:13

2. How does the resurrection impact the Christian understanding of death?

1. Thess. 4:14

1 Corinthians 15:12-22

3. **Read 1 Thessalonians. 4:14-17.** What assurance did Paul provide for those concerned that they would miss out if they died before Christ’s return?

4. What comfort did he provide for those who would still be alive at Christ’s return?

5. What promises shape the future for all Christians?

1 Thess. 4:17b

1 Thess. 5:9

1 Thess. 5:10

6. What warnings did Paul give regarding end times?

7. How will the end times be different for believers and unbelievers?

1 Thess. 5:3-5

Colossians 1:12-14

8. Why is it dangerous to ignore Christ's Return?

Matthew 25:1-13

Luke 12:16-21

James 4:13-15

9. Why is undue speculation about the timing of Christ's return dangerous?

10. What does Christ say about his return?

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John 14:1-6

John 17:24

Mark 13:32-37

Luke 21:26-28

11. What can Christians do to stay ready for Christ's return?

1 Thess. 5:6-11 (see also John 13:34-37 and Colossians 3:12-16)

12. **Read Philippians 1:20-21.** How might a Christ-centered view of death shape your life and your natural fear of death?

Memory Verse: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." *Philippians 1:21*

Prayer Guide: Lord Jesus, prepare my heart.

LESSON SEVEN: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

OPENING QUESTION: *What encourages you when you go through times of difficulty?*

Note: Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians followed not long after the first with similar themes and an assurance that Jesus had not already returned.

1. What did Paul commend the Thessalonians for in his thanksgiving?

2. How do the qualities they were commended for help people withstand trials?

3. What does Paul say about the suffering that comes to God's beloved children?
2 Thess. 1:4-5 (see also 1 Thess. 3:3-4)

4. What can God accomplish through suffering?
2 Corinthians 1:3-11

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

1 Peter 1:7

5. Read Lamentations 3:16-26. How can God's beloved children find comfort in the midst of suffering?

Have you experienced this personally?

6. Why do you think it is tempting to seek revenge in the face of unjust suffering?

Note: *Judgment*, also translated *vengeance* must not be confused with revenge. The purpose of judgment/vengeance is to satisfy God's holy law; the purpose of revenge is to pacify a personal grudge. (W. Wiersbe)

7. How is God's justice affirmed in these passages?

2 Thess. 1:6-10

Isaiah 35:3-4

Jeremiah 11:20

Psalms 9:7-12

8. Why do you think it is important to leave vengeance to God and not take it into your own hands?

9. Write Paul's prayer out in your own words and make it yours. 2 Thess. 1:11-12

Memory Verse: "We pray that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you..."
2 Thessalonians.1:12a

Prayer Guide: Lord, be glorified in me.

LESSON EIGHT: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

OPENING QUESTION: *What were you taught about evil people when you were growing up?*

Note: This chapter has confounded scholars and commentators. But approaching it with humility gives important insights about the nature of evil and the return of Christ.

2 Thessalonians contains Paul's only discussion of the *man of lawlessness*. John refers to him as the *antichrist*.

Paul calls the one who is defiant of all law the *man of lawlessness* and the *lawless one*. This means he has total disregard for both the moral law, asserting there are no such things as absolutes, and the civil law, advocating anarchy in the name of freedom.

1. Why did Paul write to the Thessalonians about the coming of the Lord? vv.1-3
2. What do you learn in these verses about God's timing in salvation history?

Galatians 4:4-5

Luke 4:16-21

John 17:1-4

Ephesians 1:4-10

3. How does the man of lawlessness display his evil? List each characteristic. v. 4
4. Read Matthew 24:1-12.
What are Christ's warning about the time of lawlessness?

5. How is the man of lawlessness defeated? v. 8, (see also Isaiah 11:1-4)
6. What protects people from the power of the lawless one? v.10, (see also John 8:31-32)
7. Why do people follow the lawless one? v. 10, (see also Romans 1:18-24)
8. What do you find are your most effective defenses against deception and evil?
1 John 4:1-6

John 14:15-26
9. **Read Isaiah 5:20 and 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.**
What prevents people from seeing evil for what it is?
10. What allows people to live in the truth? vv.13-17, (see also Hebrews 10 :19-25)

Memory Verse: “May the Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.” *2 Thessalonians 2:16-17*

Prayer Guide: Lord, deliver us from evil.

LESSON NINE: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

OPENING QUESTION: *How have your ideas about work shaped your life?*

1. What prayer did Paul request of his friends? vv.1-2
2. Why do you think it is important to allow the people you pray for to pray for you?
3. What confidence in God undergirded Paul's request for himself as well as those for the Thessalonians? vv.3-5

Note: It is assumed that Paul's comments about idleness were addressed to Thessalonians who had stopped working because they expected Christ's imminent return.

4. What dangers did people drift into when they were idle?
(see also Proverbs 20:4, Ecclesiastes 10:18 and 1 Timothy 5:13)
5. What dangers do people drift into when they are overworking?
Proverbs 23:4-5

Ecclesiastes 5:16-17

6. Take a moment to reflect on your own work habits.
In what way are you tempted towards idleness or overwork?

7. How were idle believers to be treated? vv. 14-15

8. What work are you entrusted with until the Lord returns?

2. Thess. 2:16-17

2. Thess. 3:13

Ephesians 2:10

John 13:13-17

Jude 20-22

9. What in Paul's final blessing do you desire? Shape it into a prayer.

Memory Verse: "May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance."
2 Thessalonians 3:5

Prayer Guide: Lord, help me wait in hope.

REVIEW LESSON

Remember what you studied by connecting the words of the **Lord's Prayer** with the key teachings found in the Letters to the Thessalonians

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name

- What reminder of God's character does the letter contain?

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

- What were the Thessalonians urged to do in order to follow God's will and bring His kingdom to earth?

Give us this day our daily bread.

- What daily provisions from God would help the people withstand persecution and continue in faithfulness?

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

- What sins were they warned to leave?
- What assurance were they given that God would judge those who sinned against them?

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

- What evil were they to avoid?

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever.

- What promises in the letters assure you of this?

Paul's Second Missionary Journey



