

#### A JOURNEY THROUGH 1 THESSALONIANS \_\_\_

### ABOUT THIS READING PLAN

This reading plan walks you through the history of Thessalonica and Paul's missionary work there. It also takes an in-depth look at each chapter of Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica.

Each day's reading includes:

- scripture corresponding to the background or chapter focus of the week
- a commentary or reflection thought for you to process the text more intentionally
- reflection questions to allow you to begin to internalize this book's message and apply it to your walk with Jesus

## ADDITIONAL STUDY RESOURCES

We highly recommend that you watch the following BibleProject videos online:

- 1 Thessalonians Overview at graceintheword.cc/1ThessaloniansOverview
- How to Read the Bible: New Testament Historical Context at graceintheword.cc/NTLettersHistorical
- How to Read the Bible: New Testament Literary Context at graceintheword.cc/NTLettersLiterary

Check out graceclarksville.com/graceintheword for more resources and join our Facebook community at facebook.com/groups/graceintheword

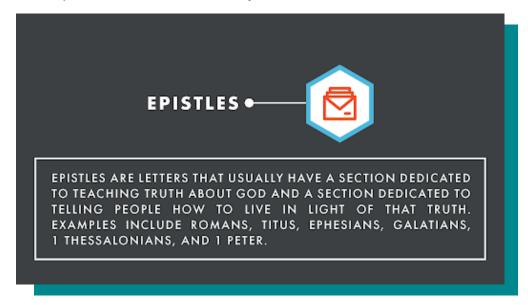
Study material in this guide was adapted from The BibleProject, ESV Study Bible, NLT Filament Bible App, Contagious Christianity by Charles Swindoll, Knowing the Bible: 1&2 Thessalonians by Matt Smetherst, 1&2 Thessalonians by N.T. Wright, Enduring Word Commentary of 1 Thessalonians by David Guzik, The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians by John R. W. Stott, 1 And 2 Thessalonians by Leon Morris, The NIV Application Commentary of 1 & 2 Thessalonians by Michael W. Holmes

Name & Contact Information:

What is your hope for this seven weeks in God's Word?

## HOW TO READ A NEW TESTAMENT LETTER

1 Thessalonians is an epistle (letter) that was written by Paul to the church of Thessalonica.



#### **HOW TO READ A NEW TESTAMENT LETTER (EPISTLE)**

ADAPTED FROM "GALATIANS" - SHE/HE READS TRUTH

Most of the books that make up the New Testament are letters. Some were addressed to churches, while others were written to individuals. Here are some principles to keep in mind when reading these letters.

- 1. Reading a letter can be like listening to one side of a conversation.
  - We must look for context clues to figure out what was going on.
- 2. Letters were meant to be read all at once.
  - This allows the reader to see the author's progression of thought and make connections that might otherwise be missed.
- 3. These letters were written to believers learning to live in Christian community.
  - The authors intended for these to be read outloud to the entire church and often be shared with other churches as well.
- 4. These letters were written to a specific group of believers in history.
  - Some bits of guidance were written to a specific problem while others articulate principles that are universally true.
- 5. New Testament letters draw heavily on the Old Testament.
  - The Old Testament was the Bible of the early church. The better we know the Old Testament, the better equipped we are to understand the NT letters.
- 6. The New Testament Letters are part of our family history.
  - Much has changed in the last two thousand years, but the faith that brought hope to Christians in these early churches is the same faith we hold on to today.
- 7. Jesus is the point of these letters.
  - These letters were written in the years right after Jesus' life, death and resurrection. They were written so the readers would grow in their understanding of who He is, what He has done, and what He has promised to do, so His followers can become more like Him.

## PRAYERS & REFLECTIONS

#### BEFORE YOU READ GOD'S WORD TODAY, SEEK HIS HELP WITH THESE 5 PRAYERS

- 1. God, give me wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
- 2. God, let any knowledge I gain serve to help me love You and others more and not puff me up.
- 3. God, help me see something new about You I've never seen before.
- God, correct any lies I believe about You or anything I misunderstand.
- **5.** God, direct my steps according to Your Word.
- \*\* Prayers from The Bible Recap Reading Plan by Tara-Leigh Cobble \*\*

## TIPS FOR APPROACHING SCRIPTURE

- Pray before you read (use the prayers above)
- Read the words in proper context, taking into consideration when it was written, to whom it was written, what was happening when it was written (a good study bible is helpful, we recommend the ESV Study Bible)
- Look for God's character and faithfulness to His people
- Look for themes that point to Jesus
- Look for anything repetitive, unusual, confusing, hopeful, comforting, challenging
- Once you are finished reading, take a few minutes to meditate on what you have read:
  - Narrow down what you've read to just one or two main thoughts.
  - **)** What did I learn about God in these passages?
  - **)** How can I praise God for what this says about him?
  - > What did I learn about the human heart in these passages?
  - What behavior/emotions come when I forget these things about God?
  - **>** What is God revealing to me today that I need to listen to?
  - What sins do I need to confess in light of what God revealed today?
  - What is one next step I can take in light of what I have read today?

## WEEKLY CHECKLIST \_\_\_

#### **WEEK ONE - 1 THESSALONIANS BACKGROUND AND THEME**

- **Day 1** // Acts 15:40-41, 16:1-40
- **Day 2** // Acts 17:1-9
- Day 3 // 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28
- **Day 4** // 1 Thessalonians 2:4-8, 3:3-4, 3:13, 4:1
- Day 5 // Acts 17:3, 18: 4-6, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 4:20, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, John 14:15-19, 26-28
- Day 6 // Reflection Day Acts 17:1-9
- Day 7 // Rest Day

#### **WEEK TWO - 1 THESSALONIANS 1**

- Day 1 // 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Galatians 5:5-6
- **Day 2** // 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7, John 14:15-26
- Day 3 // 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, Romans 8:35-39, I Peter 4:12-14
- Day 4 // 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10, John 13:15, Matthew 5:16
- Day 5 // 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10, Romans 1:8, Philippians 3:17-20, Titus 2:11-14
- Day 6 // Reflection Day I Thessalonians 1
- Day 7 // Rest Day

#### **WEEK THREE - 1 THESSALONIANS 2**

- Day 1 // 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 1:9, Isaiah 55:11
- Day 2 // 1 Thessalonians 2:1-7, Acts 17:1-9, Ephesians 5:1-2
- Day 3 // 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Galatians 5:13-14, 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, Luke 4:18-19
- Day 4 // 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20, Colossians 1:28-29
- Day 5 // 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16, Matthew 13:1-9, Jeremiah 4:3, Acts 13:44-52, Isaiah 40:8
- Day 6 // Reflection Day 1 Thessalonians 2
- Day 7 // Rest Day

#### **WEEK FOUR - 1 THESSALONIANS 3**

- **Day 1** // 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13, John 13:34-35, Galatians 6:10
- Day 2 // 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5, Lamentations 3:19-24, John 14:18-26, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7
- Day 3 // 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13, 1 John 4:19
- **Day 4** // 1 Thessalonians 3:8-13, John 10:7-10
- Day 5 // 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13, Philippians 4:6-8
- Day 6 // Reflection Day 1 Thessalonians 3
- Day 7 // Rest Day

#### **WEEK FIVE - 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12**

- **Day 1** // 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Ezekiel 36:26-27, 1 Peter 1:15-23
- Day 2 // 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Hebrews 12:14, Acts 26:17-18
- Day 3 // 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, Romans 5:5-8, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:1-9
- Day 4 // 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, Matthew 22:34-40, John 15:13, Colossians 4:5-6
- Day 5 // 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13, Ephesians 4:28
- Day 6 // Reflection Day I Thessalonians 4:1-12
- Day 7 // Rest Day

#### **WEEK SIX - 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18**

- Day 1 // 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, John 14:1-3, John 11:25, 1 Peter 1:6-9
- Day 2 // I Thessalonians 4:13, Matthew 5:4, Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, John 16:20, 33
- Day 3 // 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Psalm 16:11, John 17:3, John 10:7-10, 1 Corinthians 15:55-57
- Day 4 // Acts 1:7-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Revelation 19:6-16
- Day 5 // 1 Thessalonians 4:18, Matthew 28:18-19, 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Day 6 // Reflection Day 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- Day 7 // Rest Day

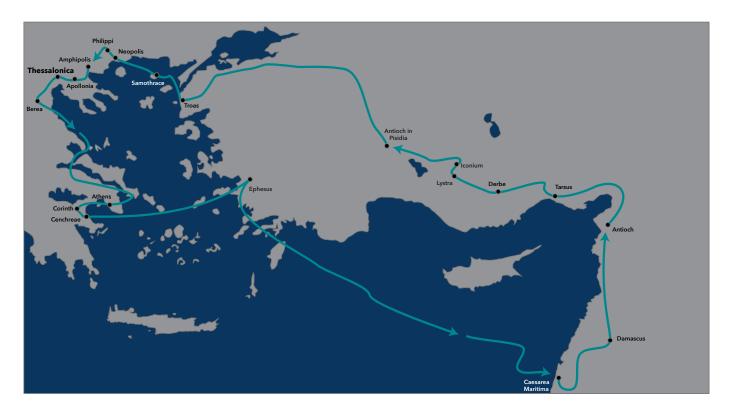
#### **WEEK SEVEN - 1 THESSALONIANS 5**

- Day 1 // 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Romans 12:2-3, 2 Timothy 4:3-5, 1 Peter 5:8-11, Mark 14:38
- **Day 2** // 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:7-17
- Day 3 // 1 Thessalonians 5:14-24, Proverbs 3:24-26, Philippians 1:6, 1 Corinthians 1:8-9
- Day 4 // 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, John 10:27, 1 John 4:1-6
- Day 5 // 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28, Romans 15:33, 2 Peter 3:14
- Day 6 // Reflection Day 1 Thessalonians 5
- Day 7 // Rest Day

#### **BONUS CONTENT FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:**

- 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 // Holy Living
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 // The hope of the resurrection
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 // Living with an alertness
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 // Final advice & Benediction

## PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY \_\_\_\_\_



### SOME OF THE PLACES THAT PAUL VISITED DURING HIS SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

**Jerusalem** - Paul begins his second mission journey. Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and other evangelists, first travel from Jerusalem to Antioch. *Acts* 15:22.

**Antioch** - Paul and Barnabas have a disagreement. They part ways. Barnabas goes to Cyprus. Paul and Silas travel through Syria and Cilicia. *Acts* 15:36-41.

**Philippi** - Paul shares the gospel with Lydia, a successful businesswoman. "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." - *Acts 16:14*. Lydia becomes the first known Christian in that region and her entire family is converted. Paul and Silas are wrongly imprisoned. When an earthquake destroys the prison, Paul and Silas do not flee and they share the gospel with the jailer and his entire family become followers of Jesus. *Acts 16:16-40*.

**Thessalonica -** In Thessalonica, Paul preaches in a Synagogue. Many people are brought to faith including Jews and Gentiles. An angry mob tries, unsuccessfully, to capture Paul and Silas as they flee the city quickly. *Acts* 17:2-9.

**Athens** - In Athens, Paul encounters widespread idol worship and preaches about Jesus and the resurrection. He faces great opposition, but some become believers including a man named Dionysius and a woman named Damaris. *Acts* 17:16-34.

**Corinth** - From Athens, Paul travels to Corinth and continues to spread the gospel message. He meets a Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla, who moved to Corinth after Roman Emperor Claudius ordered Jews to leave Rome. They join Paul on his missionary journey. *Acts* 18:1-4.

**Ephesus** - Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, sail to Ephesus. Paul preaches at a synagogue and brings more to faith in Christ. As Paul leaves for Caesarea, Priscilla and Aquila stay behind in Ephes us to encourage new believers. *Acts* 18:19-21.

**Caesarea** - From Caesarea, Paul travels to Antioch, from where he later would begin his third mission journey. *Acts 18:22*.



#### **DAY 1 - MONDAY**

Paul's Missional Background

Today's reading gives us background on Paul's Missionary journey in order for us to gain context for our study of the letter of 1 Thessalonians.

Acts 15:40-41, 16:1-40

**REFLECTION:** In these passages, we see Paul's efforts being led by the Spirit. Can you see the ways the Spirit is leading you and putting people in your path for you to be able to share Jesus with them? How can you be an encouragement to those you come in contact with this week?

#### **FAITHFUL ENCOURAGER**

Acts 16 gives us some insight into the time frame when Paul visited Thessalonica during His second missionary journey. This journey took him through many cities, and he encountered much persecution and many trials. Throughout the trials, Paul continued to faithfully preach the gospel even though he was often run out of town or even put into prison at times. Paul's faithful efforts produced incredible results as the Spirit worked through him to plant churches and establish communities that would continue bringing the message to those across the region.

During this period, Paul traveled all over the region and recruited other followers such as Silas to go with him on this journey. The Holy Spirit led these men to go where the kingdom could be advanced. On this journey, they visited cities such as Derbe, Lystra, and Philippi and had many personal encounters with people along the way, sharing about Jesus and changing their lives forever.

Today's reading leads up to the part of the journey when Paul and Silas first traveled to Thessalonica. Paul was a passionate, encouraging teacher and leader who truly loved those in the churches he established and wanted to continue to be an encouragement to them even after he could no longer physically be present with them. We see his heart come out in these letters written to the churches.

#### **DAY 2 - TUESDAY**

#### Thessalonica Background/Context

Today's reading from the book of Acts gives us the background story of Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians and how this church was first established.

Acts 17:1-9

**REFLECTION:** Why is the history of Thessalonians important towards getting a deeper understanding of who God is and what He is calling us to through our study of this letter?

"The epistles to the Thessalonians are all too little studied today, It may be true that they lack the theological profundity of Romans and the exciting controversy of Galatians; but nevertheless their place in Scripture is an important one. No other writing of the great apostle (Paul) provides a greater insight into his missionary methods and message." - Leon Morris 1 and 2 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians is an epistle rarely used for daily study and reflective bible reading, but as stated above, it is a powerfully important book of the bible. 1 Thessalonians is a book of encouragement from three mission giants (Paul, Silas, and Timothy). It is a book of correction, a book of eschatology (the study of the end times), and, most notably, a book that reminds us what it looks like to faithfully follow Jesus in our daily lives as we wait for His glorious return. Our reading of 1 Thessalonians becomes more impactful when we understand Thessalonica's background and history to see what the new Christians of this city were living through.

In the first century, Thessalonica was the capital of and largest city in Macedonia. It was a significant province of power and trade for the Roman empire. Thessalonica was founded by Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's army officers, and named after Alexander's half-sister. This prominent city held a strategic position for the Roman empire. Thessalonica had a natural harbor that the Roman military took advantage of and because of this it had a large trade economy. This led to Thessalonica becoming a free city in 42 B.C. Being a free city came with the privilege of being led by politarchs (five to six men who ruled as the city officials for Thessalonica).

Like many cities and provinces in this day, Thessalonica had many diverse religions, including the worship of Caesar, who was viewed as divine. There was also a heavy Jewish population with a prominent synagogue. Paul, Silas, and Timothy came to Thessalonica after being run out of Philippi (Acts 16:9-40). While in Thessalonica, the three stayed at the home of a man named Jason. For three weeks, Paul preached the gospel of Jesus at the synagogue. Paul, Silas, and Timothy worked and served the people of Thessalonica.

Paul's ministry within Roman cities often caused anger among the pagans and persecution of the Jewish people. A mob took Jason to the politarchs for rebuke for housing the three missionaries (Acts 17:1-7). Upon his release, Jason went to Paul, Silas, and Timothy, and the three left quickly in the night. (Acts 17:8-9). After this, the three missionaries went to Berea. Paul then went to Athens, where Silas and Timothy later joined him.

Paul hadn't forgotten the Thessalonians though. He sent Timothy to check in on how the church in Thessalonica was doing since they left unexpectedly. Timothy met Paul in Corinth some time later and reported to Paul what he had seen there. Based on Timothy's report, Paul began to write to the Thessalonians. We can read in Paul's words the excitement and joy he feels for their continued faith in Jesus. Paul explains why they left so abruptly and shares his fears that they might think they were just grifters or cons because of their abrupt departure. He also addresses their confusion and anticipation of Jesus' quick return, and, finally, encourages them to continue to live in faith with Jesus and community with one another.

#### **DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY**

Structure

I 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

**REFLECTION:** Put yourself in the shoes of the church receiving this letter. What do you think those receiving it felt after hearing these prayers? What do you take away as a follower of Christ as you read these prayers?

#### THE STRUCTURE OF THE LETTER

Today's reading covers the three prayers that Paul scattered throughout this letter to the Thessalonians. It's important to remember that this was written as a letter to the church at Thessalonica and was intended to be read aloud to the church. So as we read the letter, it's important to see the layout of the letter. The book opens with a prayer of thanksgiving followed by a celebration of the Thessalonians' faithfulness to Jesus. Paul knows this faithfulness has been challenging in their culture, so next is a transition prayer for endurance to stay faithful, followed by a challenge for them to continue growing in their faith. Paul ends the letter with a prayer of hope to encourage the believers there.

- Opening Thanksgiving Prayer 1:1-5
- 1 Thessalonians 1-3 A Celebration of their Faithfulness to Jesus
- Transition Prayer for Endurance 3:11-13
- 1 Thessalonians 4-5 A Challenge to Keep Growing as Followers
- Final Prayer of Hope 5:23-28

During Paul's absence from the Thessalonian church, questions and doubt began to creep into their hearts. Questions like: "Did Paul really have genuine love and concern for us?" "Had Paul moved on to other churches and forgotten about us?" In his letter, Paul expresses his longing to be with them. As he conveys his hindered attempts to visit them, we see true evidence here that he loves these people and this church. The church was also beginning to doubt if their effort was in vain. Since Jesus was "coming soon" they questioned ,"Why do we need to work hard at anything?" Paul addresses this in this letter as well, as we will see. 1 Thessalonians serves as Paul's attempt to answer the question, "What should we do as Christians while we are waiting for Jesus' return?"

Why do you think Paul structured his letter this way?

For a deeper dive into this structure, we highly recommend watching the BibleProject Overview of 1 Thessalonians at graceintheword.cc/1ThessaloniansOverview

#### **DAY 4 - THURSDAY**

Theme

I 1 Thessalonians 2:4-8, 3:3-4, 3:13, 4:1

**REFLECTION:** What theme interests you the most out of the three themes that are present in 1 Thessalonians? Why?

#### THE THEMES OF 1 THESSALONIANS

Paul's ministry centered on two aspects: the communication of the Word of God and the sharing of his life (1Th 2:8). Paul's motives were to please God (1Th 2:4; 4:1) and to express his concern for the Thessalonians' welfare (1Th 2:8).

#### Faithfulness during **PERSECUTION**

The Thessalonian church was founded in the midst of persecution. Paul encouraged the believers there to stand firm and not be shaken by these afflictions because Christians are "going to experience affliction" (1Th 3:3-4).

#### **SANCTIFICATION**

The process of sanctification begins once a person believes in Christ and receives forgiveness of sins. Paul's prayer for the believers at Thessalonica was that God would make their hearts "blameless in holiness" before God (1Th 3:13). Salvation is the beginning of sanctification.

#### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Jesus's return is mentioned in every chapter of 1 Thessalonians.

Taken from He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan

#### **DAY 5 - FRIDAY**

Acts 17:3, Acts 18: 4-6, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 1 Corinthians 4:20 1 Thessalonians 1:5, John 14:15-19, 26-28

**REFLECTION:** Paul speaks often of the power of the Holy Spirit's work in God's people. The Spirit can give us strength and help us endure when times get hard. Do you see the Holy Spirit as a helper? Can you think of times that the Spirit's work within you has strengthened you to endure?

#### **HELP WHILE WE WAIT**

Have you ever been through a tough season, one where you wondered how much more you could bear? Have you ever felt alone in your calling? Have you ever worked at something you believed you were supposed to do, but were met with more opposition than welcome? Have you ever gotten so tired you wondered if you could press on? When the apostle Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians, I have to believe he knew that feeling. He had given his recent years to proclaiming a simple, but polarizing, message: "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah" (Acts 17:3).

The Holy Spirit was working through Paul, but the road to spreading the gospel was tough. When Paul arrived in Corinth during his second missionary journey, he was beat up, weary, and ready for some encouraging news. Up to that point, he had been driven out of nearly every town he'd visited. It is a miracle of the Holy Spirit that the opposition he faced had not worn him down to nothing. But it wasn't all opposition. He had seen a few churches take hold along the way. One of those churches was in the port city of Thessalonica, the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. Paul's letters to the Thessalonians are like so many of his other letters: filled with theological clarification and instruction for how to live the Christian life. But it doesn't take long to see that these letters are also a little different from the others, filled with words of affection for these believers who have been a tremendous encouragement to Paul.

The legacy of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians is evidence of the Spirit's work in the world. Were it not for missions like the one that took Paul to Thessalonica, we would not have the gospel today. And were it not for the Holy Spirit's work, those missions would have failed to build anything lasting. So, when you're struggling, wondering if you can go on, remember this: the Holy Spirit is at work in the world still. How can we know this? Because Jesus promised He would send the Spirit as our helper in this life (John 14:15-31). When your faith is in Jesus, the Messiah, you are never alone.

In the face of impossible odds and unbearable weariness, God is at work. May the Lord encourage your heart as you read these letters and the story surrounding them.

By Russ Ramsey - He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan

#### **DAY 6 - SATURDAY**

Reflection Day

Acts 17:1-9

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:**

- What are you most excited about in doing this study of 1 Thessalonians for the next seven weeks? Why?
- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- Why do you think it's important to know this background information and literary context for this study of 1 Thessalonians?
- How can you begin to internalize what you read and learn through this study for the next seven weeks?

#### **DAY 7 - SUNDAY**

Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.





#### **DAY 1 - MONDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Galatians 5:5-6

**REFLECTION:** Faith, hope, and love are the active characteristics of a life lived in genuine gratitude for the gospel. How can you begin to live a life of thankfulness by sharing your faith, hope, and love?

#### **THANKFULNESS**

Thanksgiving is a practice that is far too foreign to us today. Typically when we think of the posture of gratitude, it's wrapped around a holiday celebrated once a year when we gorge ourselves on delicious food and late-night shopping indulgences on Black Friday. As people, as Christians even, we struggle to live lives of thanksgiving. Paul demonstrates the act of thankfulness as part of the Christian life in almost every letter he writes to the early churches.

Every one of Paul's epistles, minus Galatians, opens with thanksgiving. This was a custom of introduction, but more specifically, this was also the posture of Paul's heart. He felt grateful for the impact the gospel message had on these churches, cities, and provinces. This was the mark of his gratitude towards the Thessalonians.

Paul points to three things he is specifically thankful for in the people of Thessalonica: the faith of the Thessalonians (faithful work), the love they share (loving deeds), and the hope they carry daily (enduring hope). These three things define Christian life lived in gratitude. Paul feels gratitude for the Thessalonians because of their defining Christian actions and characteristics- their faith, love, and hope.

"Faith, hope, and love" is not just a catchy motto or a nice home decoration. Faith, hope, and love are the active characteristics of a life lived in genuine gratitude for the gospel. As Christ followers, these characteristics of faith, hope, and love should be evident in our lives. Just as Paul is doing in Thessalonica, we should be thankful and eager to acknowledge the characteristics of faith, hope, and love in those around us too.

#### **DAY 2 - TUESDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7, John 14:15-26

**REFLECTION:** How often do you think about the Holy Spirit?

What do you think it would look like to invite the Holy Spirit into your life throughout your day?

#### THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The truth of the Word, the conviction with which we speak it, and the power of its impact on others all come from the Holy Spirit. It is he who brings light to our minds, so that we put our message together with integrity and clarity. It is he whose inward witness assures us of its truth, so that we preach it with conviction. And it is he who carries it home with power, so that the hearers respond to it in penitence, faith and obedience. As the 1974 Lausanne Covenant put it, 'without his witness ours is futile...The same Spirit who gave power to those who preached the gospel gave joy to those who received it. He was working at both ends, so to speak, in the speakers and in the hearers. And it is not surprising to read of the converts' joy, for joy is a fruit of the Spirit. Wherever the gospel goes and people respond, there is joy - joy in heaven among the angels over sinners repenting, as Jesus said, and joy on earth among the people of God. This pattern of outward opposition and inward joy has often been repeated in the long history of the church.

by John R. W. Stott - The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians

#### **DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, Romans 8:35-39, I Peter 4:12-14

**REFLECTION:** What does it mean to share in Christ's Suffering? How can we best enter into the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Christ?

#### **SHARING IN SUFFERING**

Henri Nouwen once said,

"When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand."

Simply put, real friends are the ones who stick with you through the tough stuff. Instead of pontificating about the philosophical realities you're facing, they're the ones who enter the mess with you. They walk with you through the challenges and the painful moments, regardless of whether or not you've reached resolution, healing, or victory. The apostle Peter tells us we should not be surprised when affliction comes our way. "Instead," we ought to "rejoice as [we] share in the sufferings of Christ, so that [we] may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:13). Peter is primarily talking about our individual sharing of Christ's sufferings with Him. However, there is another layer here; we are to rejoice in sharing Christ's sufferings with one another. For Peter knew that shared suffering and perseverance would build not only a deeper connection with Christ, but also a more tightly knit community within the body of Christ.

Perhaps part of Paul's profound appreciation for the church at Thessalonica stemmed from the fact that they had stuck with him and supported him through thick and thin, "in spite of severe persecution" (1 Thessalonians 1:6). Yet they had not grown weary in doing good, caring for those in need, or preaching "the word of the Lord," which "rang out from [them]" through faith (v.8).

As members of the Body of Christ, we are meant to share in Christ's suffering. This often means that we will endure hardship and resistance for the sake of His name and His gospel. This also means we are called to lend a "warm and tender hand" to our friends and other members of the Body. When we lend our time, our treasures, and our talents to those in need–perhaps at the expense of our own comfort and security–we glorify God and participate in His kingdom work. Instead of fearing the fiery trials, we should aspire to be the kind of local church Paul would thank God for in this present age: empowered by the Holy Spirit to faithfully endure with one another and persevere against that which opposes God's kingdom. That's how we become a cause for thanks in tumultuous and painful times.

By Andrew Stoddard - He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan

#### **DAY 4 - THURSDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10, John 13:15, Matthew 5:16

**REFLECTION:** Who is a follower of Christ that you admire? Why?

How can you be a Christ-follower that others admire in your daily life?

#### AN EXAMPLE TO ALL

Paul celebrates the Christians in Thessalonica because their example of living for Jesus has impacted other believers, pagans and Jewish people in the city, as well as people in the greater Macedonia region. A faith lived out is an example of something unique, desirable, and attainable to the world around us.

David Guzik expresses the impact of living out your faith as an example for others like this in his 1 Thessalonians commentary:

As Christians, we always need others who will show us how to follow Jesus Christ, beyond the need of hearing about how to follow Him...The good work the Lord did among the Thessalonians became known all over the region, and everyone talked about the changes. In a cosmopolitan trading city like Thessalonica, the good news could sound forth in every place to all the earth.

The power of example is one we have all been impacted by. We have all had someone who has demonstrated what it looks like to follow Jesus. We need to ask ourselves, are we that example for those around us? How might our example impact those around us, including those who are hard to love?

#### **DAY 5 - FRIDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10, Romans 1:8, Philippians 3:17-20, Titus 2:11-14

**REFLECTION:** What does it mean to have a faith that is contagious? Why is it important for your faith to be contagious?

#### **CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIANS**

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10 clearly shows how the message of Jesus was spreading in Thessalonica. The faith of those in this church was not spread by their words, but by these three things:

- 1. How they welcomed others
- 2. How they turned from idols to serve God
- 3. How they looked forward to the second coming of Jesus

In a culture where it was common to worship many gods, it would have been noticeable to others if they showed allegiance to just one God as their authority.

The hope the believers had in the expectation of Christ's return was obvious. This hope gave them an urgency to serve and be about the Lord's work in their community, making a noticeable difference to the unbelievers around them. This hope of Christ's return was also helpful to the Thessalonians as they endured trials. They could cling to the fact their suffering would have an end date and it brought confidence that the Lord would eventually bring about redemption and restoration to the world.

In his book *Contagious Christianity*, Charles Swindoll shares this sentiment about what Paul was seeing and hearing, "Still echoing down the canyons and through the streets was the word of the Lord spoken by the Thessalonian believers. Their Christianity was contagious and spreading faster than Paul can travel." Swindoll goes on to say that their lives had two purposes: "to serve a living and true God" and "to wait for His Son from Heaven..." which led them to have "responsibility in the present yet readiness for the future." He shares that there is a tendency for us, as humans, to anticipate the Lord's return so much that we neglect our responsibilities in the present or we become so involved with our present existence that we neglect to remember the future glory of Christ's return. The Thessalonians are an example of living with a good balance of these two things.

How can you live with "responsibility in the present yet readiness for the future"?

# WEEK 2

#### **DAY 6 - SATURDAY**

#### Reflection Day

I 1 Thessalonians 1

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:**

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is one truth you learned this week that you want to share?
- What do you think might need to change in your life in order for you to care for those around you the way that Paul cares for the Thessalonians?
- How can you begin to internalize and live out what you read and learned in this week's study?

#### **DAY 7 - SUNDAY**

Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.



1 THESSALONIANS 2:4



#### **DAY 1 - MONDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4, 1 Thessalonians 1:5 & 1:9, Isaiah 55:11

**REFLECTION:** Have you ever felt like you've shared the gospel with someone and it was a failure? Can you think of a time that you shared the gospel with someone and it was a success?

How does the truth laid out in Isaiah 55:11 give you encouragement to share the gospel confidently, not worrying about the outcome?

Take a moment to pray for those people in whom you have invested, whether in a quiet, unnoticed way or in a public way. Pray for their growth and maturity in Christ.

#### **FAILURE OR SUCCESS?**

Just prior to Paul's initial visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), he was imprisoned for proclaiming the name of Jesus. Paul knew his visit to the Thessalonians was a risky one, yet he went anyway! This imprisonment likely made him speak the Word of God with more passion. He reminds them in 2:1 that this visit was not a failure, or in other words, "not in vain." The original Greek for this means "without purpose." How can Paul be so sure that it was not in vain? Because he likely knew the truth laid out in Isaiah 55:11, that anytime the Word of God is heard, it can bear fruit. Sometimes, as believers, we can think that our efforts seem to be in vain, but anytime we are faithful in sharing the gospel, it has the potential to bear fruit in our lives and the lives of others.

In Matt Smethurst's commentary on 1 Thessalonians he states this:

As Paul puts it in 1 Thess. 2:4, "We have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel." Entrusted. This gospel treasure is not ours. It did not originate with us. Our responsibility is simply to believe it, cherish it, apply it, guard it, and proclaim it. And Paul insists that this gospel stewardship must be accompanied by pure motives and open methods (1 Thess. 2:3-4).

God's word has been entrusted to us to share with others, but we must be sure that the motives of our hearts are pure as we share. We are not to use God's word as a weapon or to tear others down, but to build others up. When we share God's Word with pure motives, it will plant seeds that can later lead to fruit in the lives of those who hear.

#### **DAY 2 - TUESDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 2:1-7, Acts 17:1-9, Ephesians 5:1-2

**REFLECTION:** Why do you think we care more about defending ourselves than about defending the gospel message?

What would it look like if we began to see our purpose each day as living to reflect and share the news of Jesus?

#### **LEADING WITH PURPOSE**

In chapter 2 of 1 Thessalonians, Paul reflects on his visit and his motives for sharing the gospel with the Thessalonians. Paul may have feared what impression his hurried departure with Silas and Timothy would have on the new and struggling Christians in Thessalonica.

Another reason Paul may have had for making his motives clear was to set them apart from other missionaries. Thessalonica was full of missionaries preaching messages about numerous other religions and trying to gain followers. Their common practice was not so much to gain followers as much to profit through financial gain. They would take as much as possible from their listeners, move on quickly to new areas, and try the same grift again.

Paul is trying to differentiate himself, but more importantly, the gospel. It's important to understand that Paul is writing less in defense of himself and more in defense of his gospel message. Michael W. Holmes writes, "Behind this concern over means and motives is Paul's obvious concern for the integrity of the message."

The purpose of Paul's work is not to gain, which is why he voluntarily forfeits any possible payments or donations the Thessalonians might have given him (v. 5-6), but to give the true message and freedom of Jesus. Paul works to prove not his integrity as much as the integrity of his message. Paul sees his purpose as living to reflect and share the news of Jesus, even if that means a cost to his reputation, his comfort, and his livelihood. What might it look like if we lead with this kind of purpose?

#### **DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY**

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Galatians 5:13-14, 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, Luke 4:18-19

**REFLECTION:** How would you describe "walking in a way that God would consider worthy"? When sharing the gospel with those who are skeptical, how can you treat them with the loving care of a mother or father?

Pray that you would have the courage to exhibit the characteristics of Christ to those around you in a way that leads them to be curious about the Jesus you follow.

#### USING OUR FREEDOM FOR GOOD

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Paul writes about how he shared the gospel with these brothers and sisters, and lived life alongside them. He uses imagery of a loving mother and father to show what it looks like to genuinely care for those with whom we are trying to share the gospel. He encouraged them to "walk in a way that God would consider worthy." Paul modeled this as he chose to lay down his rights to freedom for the sake of those he was trying to reach with the gospel.

Paul reiterates this to the churches in Galatia and in Corinth as he writes about using our freedom not for ourselves but in service to others. He's most clear about this in 1 Corinthians 10 when he says, "I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved."

Just as Jesus reminded us in Luke 4, we are called to "proclaim good news to the poor and bring liberty to the captives." This kind of service to others might come at a cost to us. Jesus set the example for us throughout scripture of how we can lay down our rights to serve others, not mindlessly, but rather with divine purposes in mind.

#### N.T. Wright points out that:

Paul exhorted the Thessalonians like a sports coach telling his team how to win; he encouraged them like a friend strengthening someone facing a daunting task; he testified to them like a witness in a court of law. He lost no opportunity to explain to them that the living God wanted living human beings to reflect his glory, and that he had called them, summoned them, bidden them to this utterly demanding, but utterly rewarding, way of life. But he didn't just use words, Paul was telling them all this by his own example.

#### **DAY 4 - THURSDAY**

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20, Colossians 1:28-29

**REFLECTION:** Have you ever thought about the work of real ministry as living life in community with God's people? Why or why not?

Think of someone that you might need to be more intentional about sharing life with that you aren't already. How can you begin to do the real work of ministry with them? End your time of reflection by praying for them specifically today.

#### THE WORK OF REAL MINISTRY

As chapter two begins to wrap up, we see Paul's heart pouring out. So much of 1 Thessalonians reads with a tone of warmth, gratitude, and genuine joy. Why is that? Why does Paul feel this way? Is it because he has found success? Is it because of influence and power? Is it because he may inherit some potential material gain from them following his message? No. The opposite is true.

As we have read, Paul received no earthly glory, wealth, or influence. He rejects any personal praise or feelings of pride for his missionary work. Why? Because for Paul, his definition of success is believers living for Jesus, not admiring or uplifting Paul's name.

Paul is living the work of real ministry. The work of real ministry is caring and being in community with those around us as we walk in step with Jesus. We see the gratitude and joy that Paul has towards the believers in Thessalonica. Paul genuinely cares about the gospel message of Jesus and how it is transforming the lives of the people in Thessalonica.

Paul is working to bring about real-life change. This is what we are called to do as well. We are called to genuinely care for God's people and walk with them in this life as we all strive to walk in step with Jesus. We need to be people that care about living life with people, not just our friends and family circle, but all people. The real work of ministry is both beautiful and messy, yet extremely rewarding. Genuinely caring forand being in community with others will bring us gratitude and joy just as it did for Paul.

#### **DAY 5 - FRIDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16, Matthew 13:1-9, Jeremiah 4:3, Acts 13:44-52, Isaiah 40:8

**REFLECTION:** What benefits have you experienced in your own life by being in God's Word? How can you welcome the Word of God into your life more this week?

#### WELCOMING THE WORD OVER THE WORLD

Paul's commendation of the Thessalonians is both instructive and encouraging. He commends them, first, for receiving and welcoming the preached word. This was the word that God had appointed Paul and the apostles to preach, that those who hear might believe, call on the name of the Lord, and be saved (Romans 10:8-17). Like the good soil in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-9), the Thessalonians had warmly received the word (1Thessalonians 2:13). Not only this, but they received it for what it was: the very word of God. The word of men perishes and is often false. But the word of God gives no cause for doubt. It is a living and active word, discerning all things (Hebrews 4:12). It is unchanging and effective, an almighty word that does not return void (Isaiah 40:8, 55:11), bearing fruit in all who receive it.

Indeed, Paul notes how the received word has transformed the Thessalonians into imitators of God. Having welcomed the word, they became courageous even in the face of persecution, holding fast to the truth. Consider what a contrast is found in their persecutors; having rejected the word, they have become displeasing to God, hostile to everyone, and fill up their sins to the limit until wrath overtakes them. There is no middle ground; we are either hot or cold. There comes a time when we all must either receive the word of God, or reject it. For some, as for the church in Judea and for the Thessalonians, this time of decision was marked by overt persecution. From Adam in the garden, to Abraham at Ur, to you and me living with our modern amenities—we will all either receive or reject the word. At all times, this is the crux of every issue. If you find yourself dissatisfied with the voices of this world, good. We have been made for something far more enduring, far richer, far truer. If you are hungry for unchanging truth, for life-giving and heartening transformation, for light that pierces the darkness, for life that shatters the grave, good. Welcome the word of God, which works effectively and bears fruit in all who believe.

The word of God doesn't just help us deal with a fickle and fallen world. It didn't just help the Thessalonians endure persecution. It answers the world's rumbling folly with the resounding fruit of courage, joy, and thanksgiving.

By Caleb Faires - He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan

# WEEK 3

#### **DAY 6 - SATURDAY**

#### Reflection Day

I 1 Thessalonians 2

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:**

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is one truth you learned this week that you want to share?
- Would you consider your life as being worthy of following? Why or why not? What might need to change?
- How can you begin to internalize and live out what you read and learned in this week's study?

#### **DAY 7 - SUNDAY**

Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.

## MAY THE LORD MAKE YOUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER AND FOR ALL PEOPLE GROW AND OVERFLOW...

1 THESSALONIANS 3:12



#### **DAY 1 - MONDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13, John 13:34-35, Galatians 6:10

**REFLECTION:** When was the last time you felt like someone genuinely cared for you? What did they do to make you feel that?

How might you begin to show the kind of care Paul shows towards God and others today?

#### **LOVE AT THE CENTER**

Love is a genuine emotion we all feel that is meant to be powerfully put into action in the Christian faith. It's the heart and center of the Christian faith. The Bible goes to great lengths to remind us not only that love is what we're called to do daily, but to remind us that it has been and continues to be done for us daily through the grace and love of Jesus. But what does it look like in practice?

Paul gives us a great insight in 1 Thessalonians 3 of what love is practically. He expresses it through his genuine care for the Thessalonians. Paul may not be with them, he may not even be physically near them, but his heart is drawn toward them because he cares for them. Paul's care is translated through his original visit to them to preach the message of the gospel. His care is seen in his thoughts and prayers for them when he's gone. His care is expressed by sending Timothy to visit and check in on them. His care is found in every intentional word Paul writes to the Thessalonians.

#### **DAY 2 - TUESDAY**

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5, Lamentations 3:19-24, John 14:18-26, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

**REFLECTION:** Paul finds it important that these believers strengthen one another in the midst of suffering so that they can stand firm in their faith. Are there some things you can do to help encourage someone who is in the midst of suffering or difficulty?

#### **COMFORT OF COMMUNITY**

In Thessalonians, he (Paul) uses heartfelt, personal words to support his friends and tell of his own troubles in reaching them. Twice, Paul tells them of how he longed to be with them, and when he could not, he sent Timothy, who was like a spiritual son to him, in his place. From Athens, he anxiously awaits for Timothy's return and news of the church in Thessalonica. Deeply encouraged by their growth in Christian love and faith in the face of persecution, he writes to them, declaring, "Indeed you are our glory and joy!" (1 Thessalonians 2:20). The growing community of believers in Thessalonica were walking with each other in their trials, sharing in one another's suffering and in one another's comfort. That is how the Church works, both then and now. Paul says that the Father "comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 1:4). His Spirit is our greatest comfort because He shared in our affliction and understands our suffering, though He Himself never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Comfort does not always mean an end to suffering, but the Church can be a relief in the midst of suffering. Look at grief as an example; the loss of a brother or sister in Christ is not undone by comfort. But when a church community comes together to grieve, the burden of suffering and the relief of joy are shared. The weight of individual suffering becomes lighter when shared in community, when sorrow turns to hope (Lamentations 3:19, 21-22). The hope of all is the hope of one.

The Church offers that support, from the saints in Paul's day to the congregations we are a part of now, both locally and globally. Above all, we have with us the love and mercy and comfort of the Father, the suffering Christ, and the Holy Spirit, who guides and kindles the Body of Christ.

By David Chaniott - He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan

#### **DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13, 1 John 4:19

**REFLECTION:** What do you typically pray for when you pray for others?

How do you think a marker of our love is praying for people even when they don't ask for it or know you're doing it?

#### THE DEPTH OF HIS LOVE

Toward the end of his first letter to the Christians at Thessalonica, Paul encourages his readers by transcribing his prayer for them. In 1 Thessalonians 3:12, he prays, "May the Lord cause you to increase and overflow with love for one another and for everyone, just as we do for you."

As he says earlier in the chapter, Paul is anxious about the Christians at Thessalonica (vv.1-5). He fears that Satan has tempted these new believers to abandon the gospel because of the difficulty and persecution they've had to endure as a result of their faith in Jesus. But in today's reading, as Paul finishes up his letter to his brothers and sisters in the faith, he feels the need to encourage them to continue to grow. If they are going to endure current hardships and afflictions, as well as troubles yet to come, they will need one another. They must learn to love each other in a way that cannot be quelled, no matter the circumstances they face. Their love must be strengthened in the face of persecution, not eroded by it.

Paul's prayer was for the Christians of Thessalonica to understand the depth of God's love for them, trusting that from that understanding, their love for others would overflow. He also prayed that the Lord would "make [their] hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father" (1 Thessalonians 3:13). Learning to love and live this way comes not from our own strength, but out of the abundant, overflowing love of the God who loved us first.

By Chris Martin - He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan

# **DAY 4 - THURSDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 3:8-13, John 10:7-10

**REFLECTION:** What is Paul's overarching tone to the Thessalonians in these verses? What can we learn from Paul in these passages?

#### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO REALLY LIVE?

Unfortunately, humankind rarely turns to God for His thoughts on how to live, even though He is our Maker. Instead, we tend to seek out "many devices" of our own to make us happy. We substitute the artificial for the authentic, the phony for the real - particularly in three areas:

- 1. Mentally, we substitute knowledge for wisdom. Many times, we are more impressed by scholarship and the opinions of experts than by divine understanding.
- 2. Emotionally, we substitute feelings for facts. We're more prone these days to believe what feels right rather than what the facts say is right.
- **3.** Spiritually, we substitute the temporal for the eternal. We cling to what won't last and let go of what will.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:8, we see Paul's joyful response to the Thessalonians' firm faith as he says, "For now we really live" Paul was enduring constant hardships, but because of four factors in his life, he could experience God's perspective on real living. The first factor appears in verse 9, he was joyful in gratitude. Paul thankfully counted God's blessings in his life. The second factor appears in verse 10, he was earnest in prayer. He was handing the burden for the Thessalonians into the hands of God. The third factor appears in verses 11-12, he was abounding in love. Only the Lord can inspire that kind of penetrating and far-reaching affection. The first three factors in Paul's life all build toward the fourth, which involves personal holiness. The world may chip away at God's standards and try to convince us that "anything goes" and if it feels good, do it." But when Christ comes again, his idea of right and wrong will be the standard. When these four factors come together in our lives (as we see in the life of Paul), mentally we will grow wiser; emotionally, we will grow stronger; and spiritually, we will grow purer. This is what an abundant life looks like.

Adapted from Contagious Christianity by Charles Swindoll

## **DAY 5 - FRIDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13, Philippians 4:6-8

**REFLECTION:** What seems powerful to you about Paul's prayer?

What do you want your prayer life to be like? How can you begin to invite that into your life?

Pray the three aspects of Paul's prayer found in verses 11-13: that you might be able to be present with those suffering, that your love for them would increase and that your heart would be strengthened to pursue holiness.

#### THE POWER OF PRAYER

Has this situation ever happened to you: you're sitting with someone, maybe a friend or family member, and they are opening up about a significant struggle in their life? They're lamenting the situation. They're profoundly hurting. As they wrap up, you feel a need to encourage them or try to offer help, so you say something like, "I'm so sorry you're dealing with that. I will be praying for you."

If we're honest, this probably happens a lot. Maybe it's a desire to express southern hospitality; perhaps it's a genuine feeling we have to offer prayers to a God that we know is capable of ultimately impacting this situation. Often the problem is that there's a significant difference between just talking about praying and actively engaging in it. It's nearly impossible to experience the working power of prayer when we are just talking about it. The power of prayer is felt in actively doing it.

Wrapping up chapter 3, Paul is not just talking about his prayers for the Thessalonians but actually lifting them up in prayer at the moment. He prays for not just what they may want but, more importantly, what they need: strong hearts, holiness, and blameless lives. Paul's prayer is powerful, not because he uses big and powerful words, but because it's active. An active prayer is a powerful prayer. What might our lives and the lives of those we live with look like if we leaned into the power of prayer?

# WEEK 4

# **DAY 6 - SATURDAY**

# Reflection Day

#### I 1 Thessalonians 3

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:**

In 1 Thessalonians 3, Paul seems to say that there isn't necessarily anything wrong with the Thessalonians' faith at present; he only implies that their faith needs to continue to grow especially in the face of opposition. In what ways can the content, passion and pattern of Paul's prayer be a model for us?

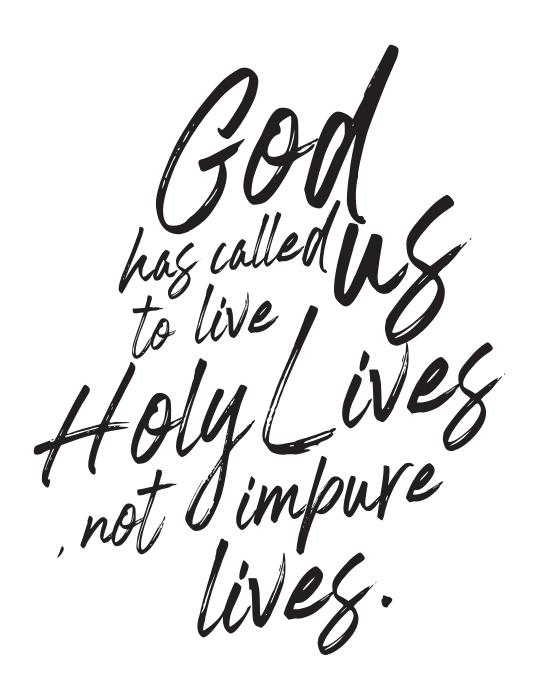
Paul is very concerned with them being swayed away from "standing firm in the word" (3:8). What are you tempted to "stand firm" in other than the word?

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is one truth you learned this week that you want to share?
- As we read about Paul's care and prayer for others, did anyone come to mind that you couldbe praying for? What would it look like for you to reach out and care for that person this week?
- How can you begin to internalize and live out what you read and learned in this week's study?

# **DAY 7 - SUNDAY**

Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.



1 THESSALONIANS 4:7



## **DAY 1 - MONDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Ezekiel 36:26-27, 1 Peter 1:15-23

**REFLECTION:** Take a moment to think about what it means to "please God". What does the truth that we bring pleasure to our Maker's heart–imply about who God is and what He is like?

#### LIVING TO PLEASE GOD

Paul makes holiness abundantly practical. In today's passage he tells us that God's will for our lives is that we are sanctified, which means "made holy." He then unpacks what it means to "live in holiness," explaining what it consists of in a practical way. It's keeping away from sex outside the context of marriage, exercising self-control, loving your brother and sister in the Lord, minding your own business, working hard and well, and behaving as decent citizens in your communities (1Thessalonians 4:3-7).

In many ways the mystery of holiness is not all that mysterious. It's readily practical and down to earth. Holiness isn't something that is outside our grasp after all. God intends for us to be holy in our everyday lives—here and now. That is His will for us. That is what He has called us to (v.7).

The challenge Paul brings to the Thessalonians, and to us, is simply to keep pursuing this holiness. The practical outworkings of holiness are the simple things of everyday life. The question is, do we believe God's Word for us more than we love our own way of living? Do we believe His way is better? Will we walk in the day-to-day holiness He has for us?

Unlike string theory, holiness is not a complex, overwhelming mystery. It's being faithful to your wife. Being vigilant against lust and sexual temptations. It's keeping your word, loving your neighbor, and living an ordinary life that has been changed by God's extraordinary grace. That's the holiness we're called to. We won't be perfect. Thank God for His grace. But we are called to live in the holiness we're given in Christ. And a big part of living in holiness is learning to walk in it.

By Jeremy Writebol - He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan

# **DAY 2 - TUESDAY**

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Hebrews 12:14, Acts 26:17-18

**REFLECTION:** What is something that culture says is okay that as a Christian you know is not? Why is it tempting to follow the culture's values?

How do you think you could begin to live set apart today?

#### **SET APART**

When Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians, Roman culture was marked by a lack of sexual purity. In the Roman empire, the motto for sex was "anything goes." As commentator David Guzik points out, "...chastity and sexual purity were almost unknown virtues." Simply put, Roman culture said and did one thing, but Christians were called to another standard.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians what that standard is, holiness (v.3). As Christians, we are called to a standard different from that of the culture around us. The standard God puts before us is holiness, which means living differently, living set apart. Paul writes to the Thessalonians that "God's will is for you to be holy." (v. 4:3). Some translations use the word sanctification instead of holy. Sanctification, like holiness, means to be set apart. Tyndale commentator Leon Morris explains their differences this way, "Your sanctification points to the process of which 'holiness' is the completed state." In other words, living sanctified means setting ourselves apart from the standards or expectations of our culture and aligning ourselves with the standards of our God.

The pursuit of holiness happens in our small daily decisions to live set apart. That's why our thoughts, actions, and words matter. God is interested in every part of who we are and what we do. Learning who God is, meditating daily on what He has done for us and submitting our daily decisions to His authority will help us to lead lives that are set apart.

# **DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, Romans 5:5-8, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:1-9

**REFLECTION:** What could it look like for us to show care and concern for others in a way that makes those who aren't Christians begin to take notice?

#### A LOVING EXAMPLE

God gives us examples of how to love one another through the teachings of Jesus (John 13:34-35), the cross (Romans 5:6-8, Ephesians 5:1-2), and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5, Galatians 5:22-23).

In verse 12 of 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul reminds them that showing this kind of generous love will lead those who are not Christians to respect the way they live. It is obvious from Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 that the Thessalonians showed love in many ways including, providing economic aid to those throughout the province. This kind of care and concern makes people notice and want to know more about those who show love in this countercultural way. Generosity and grace warm the heart. When people see overwhelming generosity, they want to know what motivates such kindness.

In his book, Contagious Christianity, Charles Swindoll mentions three observations based on Paul's advice to keep in mind about our example to non-believers:

- They are watching and wondering, so conduct yourself with wisdom.
- They are listening and learning, so speak your words with grace.
- They are individuals and important, so respond with dignity and sensitivity.

When we take these practical steps to show others love, kindness, and grace in these ways, it opens the door to relationships and opportunities to share the gospel and what Jesus means to us with them.

In his book on 1 & 2 Thessalonians, N.T. Wright explains what we can learn from early Christians:

The first Christians, in Jerusalem, sold their property, pooled their resources and shared the money thus gained among themselves (see Acts 2:44-45). This was not simply, as is sometimes said, because they expected the return of Jesus and the end of the world very soon. It was more because the early Christians saw themselves as members of a family, and families in the ancient world shared all things in common, often a business as well as a home, helping each other financially as need arose. Outsiders, looking at a movement that made striking claims about Jesus as Lord of the world, would be interested to see what effect it had on the behavior of the members. They would have seen the Thessalonians living a life of practical love, taking care of one another financially and extending their outreach to the other churches of Macedonia.

# **DAY 4 - THURSDAY**

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, Matthew 22:34-40, John 15:13, Colossians 4:5-6

**REFLECTION:** How do you think the Holy Spirit teaches us to love?

How can you lean on the Holy Spirit to allow His love to overflow in you today?

#### **OVERFLOWING LOVE**

"Love them even more..." One of the things that is unmistakable throughout Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is his genuine love and care for them. Paul's overflowing warmth and love is one of the most appealing parts of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, Paul points out that he is proud of the Thessalonians for showing brotherly love to those in Macedonia, but he calls them to more.

He calls them to love the people of Macedonia even more than they currently are. Why? Because the true mark of a Christian is one whose love is overflowing. We shouldn't just care about love as a way of being kind and accepting to the world around us, but a love so radical that it draws the attention of the world around us. We should be people marked by a love so warm, so different, so powerful that others begin to ask: why do you care so much for me? Simply, we are called to the same kind of overflowing love that Paul has for the Thessalonians.

How do we do this though? How do we become people that not only love, but overflow in our love for others? It's not easy. It's hard enough to simply show warmth and kindness to certain people, but the first thing we need to be reminded of is that everyone is loved by God. When we begin to reflect on that daily, we can begin to see people differently. We begin to see people through the lens that Christ sees them.

Secondly, we need to treat people with the love of Christ. Again, this isn't easy. It's a lifelong pursuit that we can begin today. It requires things like patience, understanding, empathy, humility just to name a few. Here's the thing: the most powerful tool we have to point others to Jesus is an overflowing love. A love that is overflowing is attractive. It brings with it the question of "why do you love me?" and "what compels you to live like that?" These questions bring about the possibility of gospel conversations because the answer to those questions can only be found in a life committed to Jesus.

We are called to an overflowing love, and the mark of the Christian is our ability and willingness to allow the Holy Spirit's love within us to overflow into everything we do. This kind of overflowing love is an awareness of the value of God's people and a genuine care for them. When we show a love like this, we live a life in the overflowing love Christ has for you and me.

# **DAY 5 - FRIDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13, 21:25, Ephesians 4:28

**REFLECTION:** What does it look like to live a quiet life working with your hands? Why is it important to work diligently at something in order to be able to provide?

#### THE VALUE OF HARD WORK

When Paul first visited Thessalonica, he taught the believers to work for a living rather than being unnecessarily dependent on others. Yet some of the Thessalonians still refused to work. Possibly, these believers so vividly expected a quick return of the Lord that they gave up all work and were just waiting on the Lord's return. Another possibility is these idle Christians may have been clients of prominent wealthy patrons. In the Roman economic system, these wealthy patrons increased their honor by having numerous clients, but this also left those clients obligated to obey or be indebted to the wealthy patrons who were often non-Christians. Christian living is more than simply loving other Christians. We must aim to be responsible in all areas of life. Some of the Thessalonians had adopted a life of idleness, depending on others to survive. Paul's urge to the Thessalonians is whatever you do, do it faithfully and be a positive force in society. This is why he urges them to live quiet lives instead of meddling in others' affairs. He also urges them to work with their hands so as to not have to be dependent on anyone else for their income.

God created Adam and Eve and put them in the Garden to tend it, not just to sit back and enjoy it. Work is not a result of the Fall, but rather it is a dignified and important part of creation. The book of Proverbs frequently talks of laziness, even equating lazy people with the foolish. In contrast, diligent people are seen as wise. While ultimate meaning and fulfillment do not come from hard work and our hard work can't lead us to forget God's ability to provide, we have no excuse to be lazy. God designed us to use our gifts and abilities to be productive and provide for ourselves and for others. As Ephesians 4:28 says, "use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need."

Adapted from the NLT Filament Bible & ESV Study Bible

# **DAY 6 - SATURDAY**

Reflection Day

1 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:**

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is one truth you learned this week that you want to share?
- Does your life look set apart to those around you? What would it look like if you began to make choices based on a genuine pursuit of holiness?
- How can you begin to internalize and live out what you read and learned in this week's study?

# **DAY 7 - SUNDAY**

Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.





# **DAY 1 - MONDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, John 14:1-3, John 11:25, 1 Peter 1:6-9

**REFLECTION:** Why is it so hard for us to wait? How can waiting grow our faith?

How can you find hope in Paul's reminder to the Thessalonians that even those believers who have already died were welcomed home to Jesus?

#### WE'RE ALL GOING HOME

In verses 13-18 of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, Paul attempts to answer some challenging questions that the new believers in Thessalonica have. Death brings many questions, and the believers in Thessalonica had some serious questions regarding some in their community who had recently died and how to reconcile that with the truth of Jesus' return. Paul taught the Thessalonians that Jesus would come back to take His people home to Himself. Because of this message the Thessalonians were expecting that Jesus would return very soon. Some had given up their jobs and radically removed themselves from society to await His coming return. Even more of the Thessalonians were struggling over how to respond when relatives or friends died and had many questions. "Would those who had already died get to be with Jesus when He returned?" "Were those believers who died already with Jesus now?"

Amid their many emotions and questions, Paul wanted them to find hope and truth. He shared the truth that the believers who had died would be part of His glorious return. Paul wanted to ensure there was no question about Jesus' saving power. Not even deathespecially not death- can stop His glorious salvation and grace from reaching our souls and bringing us into communion with Him.

## **DAY 2 - TUESDAY**

I Thessalonians 4:13, Matthew 5:4, Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, John 16:20 & 33

**REFLECTION:** How should our hope affect the way we grieve? How do we live faithfully in the tension of all that's mentioned in Ecclesiastes 3:1-15?

#### **WE HAVE HOPE**

Charles Swindoll says, "Don't let people tell you that strong Christians don't weep when death claims a loved one." It is a mark of spiritual maturity to be able to feel more than one thing at a time. God has given us the capacity to simultaneously feel the depths of sorrow over the loss of a loved one and a swell of gratitude to God for the gift of that person's life. This isn't easy. In fact, it may even be something of a learned skill. But God has given us an incredible ability to feel things deeply in their time—even conflicting emotions at the same time. Made in the image of our Creator, we can both grieve the wrongs of this world, and celebrate the sweetness of this life. Scripture has much to say about our deepest pains and brightest hopes, and as we read, we are invited to grow in our emotional, spiritual health. It's okay to feel. In fact, it is vital.

There is a time to mourn and a time to dance (Ecclesiastes 3:4)—and those seasons may come joined to each other. Now may be the time for you to weep. Now may be the time for you to celebrate. Now may be the time for you to do both. Remember, we do not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

By Russ Ramsey - He Reads Truth Mourning and Dancing Reading Plan

# **DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY**

1 Thessalonians 4:17, Psalm 16:11, John 17:3, John 10:7-10,1 Corinthians 15:55-57

**REFLECTION:** What does it mean to you that death is destroyed in Jesus?

How can we begin to live as people who know we have an eternal life with Jesus?

#### **ABUNDANT LIFE**

The Bible tells us that death will be the last enemy to be destroyed (1Corinthians 15:26)—and death is indeed our enemy. A foreign invader in this world, death is out of place and unwelcome. This is why we mourn at a funeral—because funerals were never meant to be. In the Old Testament, King David trusted the Lord to rescue his soul from the grave, resting in the hope that in the life after death, he would find himself in the presence of God, where there is "abundant joy" (Psalm 16:11).

But the hope of the Christian life is not only life after death; it's much more than that. Yes, Jesus promised His followers eternal life, but He also spoke of a new life that starts right here and now. It is life with God, and it is eternal because God is eternal. Praying to the Father, Jesus said, "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent–Jesus Christ" (John 17:3).

This promised life is abundant life (John 10:10). And how could it not be? David was right when he wrote that there is joy in the presence of God. Through the Holy Spirit, we carry that presence with us wherever we go. Life is not easy, but we can be joyful no matter what happens, because God is with us. Whether we die before the Lord returns or are caught up to meet Him in the air when He does (1Thessalonians 4:17), the life we have in Christ will continue. "Where, death, is your sting?" (1Corinthians 15:55).

From the He Reads Truth Promises of God Reading Plan

## **DAY 4 - THURSDAY**

Acts 1:7-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Revelation 19:6-16

**REFLECTION:** What does it mean for us to live awaiting Jesus' return? Spend some time in prayer today asking the Lord how you can faithfully wait in this season.

#### **HE WILL RETURN**

When Jesus completed His mission on earth, Acts tells us that "he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). Jesus physically ascended. Then the text tells us "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven" (v.11). Did you see that? This same Jesus will come back in the same way. "The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God" (1Thessalonians 4:16). The first advent celebrated the humble arrival of an infant King. The second advent anticipates the glorious, overwhelming return of that King in all His splendor and power.

Revelation 19 paints a magnificent dual picture of what we have to anticipate. John describes a massive, rejoicing wedding party for the King as he arrives to wed His bride, the church, in all the glory he has given her. Then the passage describes the royal groom differently, riding a white horse, wearing a crown, adorned in blood-dipped robes and wielding a sword from His mouth. He leads an army and "with justice he judges and makes war...He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty" (Revelation 19:11,15). The second advent is one of deep joy and deep justice. Our King Jesus will return to make us His and make us whole, and He will wipe out all that opposes Him and oppresses. He will bring true and final peace on earth and good will toward men.

We wait eagerly for Christ's return, but we do not wait passively. We've been told how we're to live as we await this second advent: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). We have the presence of our King in us now, by His Spirit. That is the seal and proof of His promise to come back. And we live for Him as we await His return.

By Barnabus Piper - He Reads Truth Everlasting Light Reading Plan

## **DAY 5 - FRIDAY**

1 Thessalonians 4:18, Matthew 28:18-19, 1 Thessalonians 5:11

**REFLECTION:** What is a truth someone has shared with you that encouraged you? Why?

How can you comfort someone with a truth of God today?

#### **COMFORT ONE ANOTHER**

Have you ever known something that someone else didn't? Not necessarily a secret you weren't supposed to tell, but maybe the information you knew made you feel like you had an advantage. Perhaps that information gave you power over another person; maybe it elevated your value and worth, or it made you feel more intelligent than those who didn't know it. We've all been in this situation probably, but Paul makes clear in chapter four of 1 Thessalonians that what he is sharing with the Thessalonians isn't a secret for them to keep but a comfort for them to share.

Verses 13-17 of 1 Thessalonians 4 are some of the heavier verses in Paul's letter. They deal with the mysteries of Christ's return, the questions and pains of death, the order of resurrection, and the glory of our eternity with Christ. Paul answers some serious concerns the Thessalonian believers had in these short verses. However, he doesn't answer these questions for them to take comfort, but to give it. There are no secrets in the Christian life. We are called to share the truth, love, beauty, hope, peace, joy, and comfort of God's Word with all.

Secrets don't make friends, and they don't make disciples either. Paul is calling the Thessalonians not only to be comforted by his words but to also give comfort to others. As we should also be reminded, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the words we read in God's message to us are meant for everyone. Let's allow the comfort Christ brings us through His Word to be the comfort we bring to those around us.

# WEEK 6

# **DAY 6 - SATURDAY**

# Reflection Day

I 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

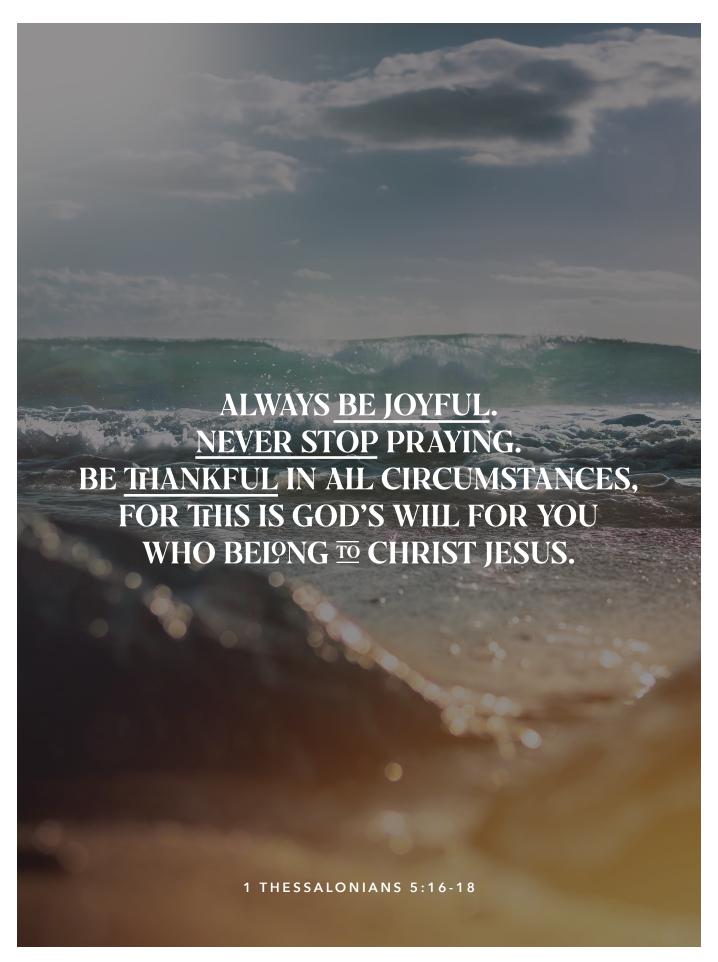
#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:**

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is one truth you learned this week that you want to share?
- What is something you're waiting for right now? How can you grow nearer to God in your waiting?
- How can you begin to internalize and live out what you read and learned in this week's study?

# **DAY 7 - SUNDAY**

Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.





## **DAY 1 - MONDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Romans 12:2-3, 2 Timothy 4:3-5, 1 Peter 5:8-11, Mark 14:38

**REFLECTION:** Are there any areas in your life that you feel like you might be "asleep"? How can you be more sober-minded in those areas this week?

#### LIVING WITH AN AWARENESS OF HIS RETURN

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5, Paul reassures the Thessalonians about "The Day of the Lord." The Day of the Lord is often what believers refer to as judgment day. Likely the Thessalonians felt scared and feared the second coming. Paul lovingly tells them, they are children of light, not children of the darkness, so they can rest assured that their salvation is secure. He reminds them, even in light of these things this doesn't give them an excuse to live like they are "asleep". The ESV Study Bible defines "asleep", as in verse 6, as "being morally and spiritually disengaged and/or living without an awareness of the second coming of Jesus."

We are told multiple times in scripture that no one knows when the Lord will return, so we are to be alert, sober-minded, clear headed, and ready. What does this mean? It means being alert to the devil's schemes and being aware of what we allow to influence our decisions. Living this way means that we use wisdom and discernment to alert us when we are moving away from sound judgment. It means we are clear headed enough to recognize the dangers of the world and the potential of our own fleshly desires to lead us astray, and that we do not get easily distracted by things that can get our lives off track. This doesn't mean that we live a boring, joyless existence. In fact, it means quite the opposite. Living alert to what is stealing your attention away from God gives you space to focus on what is real, important, eternal, life-giving, and full of joy. Living awake and aware of the second coming of Jesus means we enter each day prepared for Him to return.

# **DAY 2 - TUESDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:7-17

**REFLECTION:** Describe a good leader you have had. What made them such a good leader?

How can our response to leaders around us be a reflection of our faith in following Jesus?

#### **HONOR AND SERVE**

Chances are many of us have had a bad boss or served under the leadership of someone that probably shouldn't be in a leadership position at all. Serving or following poor leaders is never a good situation for anyone involved. Still, Paul takes time to define not only how the Thessalonians should respond to their leaders but also how their leaders should lead.

Paul first focuses on the posture of those who serve under leadership. He says, "honor those who are your leaders..." This is reminiscent of Hebrews 13:17, which says almost the same thing. We are called to honor our leaders, those over us or responsible for us, whether in work, family, society, or pastorally. However, this doesn't mean we must follow a leader with poor character or who leads unjustly. Hebrews 13:7 points to leaders that have the faith and character that is worthy of leadership and worthy of those whom they lead to honor them.

Paul then clarifies that kind of leader for the Thessalonians. He says their leaders work hard (serve), give spiritual guidance (wise), and some translations point out that their leaders care for them. In these two simple verses, Paul points to the call of the people and the call of the leader: to honor and serve. The follower and the leader have the same responsibilities, but how they execute those responsibilities are different. A leader worth following serves, leads with wisdom, and cares for those they lead. In areas where we lead, let's aim to lead with honor and service, and to those who lead us, let's aim to honor and serve them daily.

## **DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY**

1 Thessalonians 5:14-24, Proverbs 3:24-26, Philippians 1:6, 1 Corinthians 1:8-9

**REFLECTION:** List some ways you have seen God's faithfulness in your life. How does His faithfulness towards you grow your faithfulness to Him?

#### **HE IS FAITHFUL**

Paul's final benediction to the Thessalonians is a list of instructions for developing Christian character: highly regard your co-laborers with love, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone, pursue the good of all, give thanks in everything, test all things, hold on to what is good, and stay away from evil, among other words of advice (1Thessalonians 5:12-22). But these aren't just rules for the sake of being good. Paul is giving these faithful, early Christ followers a collection of transformative practices to help them deepen their maturity and grow in their faith, practices that have guided generations of believers toward a life that looks like Jesus.

It's notable that this portrait of a believer in hard times isn't frantic or fearful. They aren't to be people who strive to solve everything in their own power. They aren't to be fretting about persecution or disrespect. Instead, this is what it looks like to trust the God who first called them. This is what it looks like to seek the good of each other and the flourishing of community.

You may be thinking, How? How can I possibly do all this—comforting the discouraged and pursuing the greater good and giving thanks in everything—when it feels like my world is falling apart? Is this call to be blameless even possible? But here is the good news: you were never meant to do this alone. "He who calls you is faithful. He will do it" (1Thessalonians 5:24).

In his book Surrender to Love, David G. Benner compares this sort of reliance on God to learning how to swim. Before you can move through the water, first you have to recognize that you can float. "The English word surrender," he writes, "carries the implication of putting one's full weight on someone or something. It involves letting go... And it involves trust." Floating naturally happens when we stop trying so hard to keep our head above water.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with effort. All of these instructions are active practices we should incorporate into our lives as believers. But when we trust God's faithfulness, we can strive less, knowing the work isn't wholly dependent on us. Paul's encouragement is to keep seeking wholeness so that "the God of peace himself" may "sanctify [us] completely" (1Thessalonians 5:23). With the Lord as our confidence, we don't have to be afraid (Proverbs 3:24-26).

There may be times when we wonder if we have the endurance to keep going. We can honor our limits and acknowledge our struggles. But just like learning to swim, we can remind ourselves to float as we learn new strokes, until every movement becomes muscle memory. The work is ours, but it's also God's. He called us to it, and He is faithful to finish it.

By Jen Yokel - She Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan

## **DAY 4 - THURSDAY**

I 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, John 10:27, 1 John 4:1-6

**REFLECTION:** When was the last time you felt like God was telling you something? What did He say and how did you discern if it was truly Him?

How do you think you can begin to hear Him more clearly?

#### **DRAW NEAR**

God speaks to us daily if we're willing to listen. He speaks, leads, and directs us all the time through His Holy Spirit that dwells within believers. Far too often, we misinterpret the message or completely close ourselves off from what the Spirit is telling us. We live in a time where it's not popular to challenge beliefs, lifestyles, or choices, but that's precisely what the Christian life calls for: to be set apart, challenging the norms to be sure our lives align under the headship of Christ.

Paul speaks about this issue with the Thessalonians near the end of his letter. He encourages them not to "scoff" or turn away from prophecies. This is one of those verses that can seem scary to us today. When we hear prophecies, we may think of fortune telling or, at best, deeply radical spiritual connections with God, but in actuality, a prophecy is simply a message from God. When we understand that God's revelation (His Word) is complete, then we can begin to find peace with the truth that a prophecy is a message the Holy Spirit is giving to us personally or someone around us to encourage or convict us to live more deeply in His ways. God gives us prophecy to help us pursue Him closer, and the prophecy He gives will always be based on the truth of scripture we already have.

In other words, Paul is reminding the Thessalonians and us that God is still speaking to and not to be deaf to what He has to say. He challenges us, though, to test and discern it. We should not just accept everything someone says, even someone we trust or someone in a position of power. We are called to use wisdom, discernment, and most of all, be sure anything we hear aligns with scripture to determine what is the true message of God. God is still speaking to us today, but we must listen and draw near to His voice to hear the message.

#### **DAY 4 - FRIDAY**

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28, Romans 15:33, 2 Peter 3:14

**REFLECTION:** What does it mean to you that the God of Peace is with you? What was your biggest take away from our time together in 1 Thessalonians?

#### **GOD'S GRACE BE WITH YOU**

Final words are important, and the end of 1 Thessalonians is no exception: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (5:28). 1 Thessalonians opened with the words, "Grace to you and peace" (1:1). This is not by accident. Paul is ending where he started, and implying that everything in between is to be interpreted through the lens of God's grace. This is "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"—God's unmerited favor purchased with the currency of Jesus' blood. This grace is a free gift to us.

Paul assures us, the God of peace himself is up to something in our lives, changing us from the inside out, until the time when he will finally "sanctify you completely". As we partner with him in this transformation project, we'll find that what we think, say, do, and desire will slowly start to look more and more like Jesus.

But how do we increasingly partner with the Father in this change project? Paul says in verse 23 that we will find ourselves slowly looking more and more like Jesus as we look more and more to Jesus. The Father is faithful to keep his promises. "He will surely do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). As we look forward in confident expectation to that great day, we will be protected from despair and resignation in our fight against our remaining sinful desires.

As J. I. Packer has pointed out, growth in the Christian life is growth downward–growth in humility, awareness of our frailty, and awareness of our need of grace. As we grow downward in increasing awareness of just how wide the gap is between our holy status and our sinful attitudes and actions, we are in danger of wavering in our resolve to keep striking at the sin that remains. Paul encourages us more and more to take God at his word about our position, our progress, and our ultimate purification.

In so doing we'll find ourselves able to increasingly "act like what we are"—striking at our sin and stirring up our affection for Jesus. As we place our confident expectation in God to keep his promises, we'll become increasingly pure as Jesus is pure.

by J. J. Seid - ESV Men's Devotional Bible

# WEEK 7

# **DAY 6 - SATURDAY**

Reflection Day - 1 Thessalonians 5

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:**

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is one truth you learned this week that you want to share?
- Out of all the things that Paul advises in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22, which one stands out to you most? Why? How can you begin to live these things out daily?
- How can you begin to internalize and live out what you read and learned in this week's study?

# **DAY 7 - SUNDAY**

Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.



The most prominent theme in 1 Thessalonians is the second coming of Jesus. It is mentioned at least once in each chapter of 1 Thessalonians. This is a clear reminder to the Thessalonians and to our hearts that our ultimate hope does NOT lie in this world, but in Jesus alone.

**REFLECTION:** What are the benefits of keeping the thought of Jesus' return in front of us at all times? In what ways do you think living with our hearts and minds set on His return changes our perspective?

1:3	"hope in our Lord Jesus Christ"		
1:10	"to wait for his Son from heaven"		
2:19	"before our Lord Jesus at his coming"		
3:13	"at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints"		
4:15	"the coming of the Lord"		
4:16	"the Lord himself will descend from heaven"		
5:2	"the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night"		
5:3	"as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman"		
5:23	"at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"		

# BONUS CONTENT \_

Although our official seven week study has ended, our sermon series through 1 Thessalonians will continue for four more weeks. We encourage you to follow along on Sundays and use this bonus content each week as personal reflection on that week's sermon.

# **WEEK OF OCTOBER 31ST**

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

"'But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you' These principles are so basic that Paul knew they were obvious to the Thessalonian Christians. The Thessalonians were taught by God about the importance of love, yet we must all be reminded...It wasn't that the Thessalonians were without love; their love toward all the brethren was well known, but they had to 'increase more and more' in their love."

-David Guzzik

How do you think you might need to increase in love this week?

"...a special kind of love binds the members of God's family together."

-John R. W. Stott

What is the special kind of love that binds us, God's family, together? How can we see that in others?

# **WEEK OF NOVEMBER 7TH**

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

**REFLECTION:** Do you fear death? Why or Why not? What emotions do you have when you think about the "coming of the Lord?"

#### THE HOPE OF RESURRECTION

Paul wants to infuse the Thessalonians' grief with hope. He wants to free them from their mistaken belief that those who died "in Christ" have missed the opportunity to participate in the resurrection. He gives them truths to cling to that will guard them from hopelessness. They will know that they have understood Paul's teaching when they are able to "encourage one another" by sharing his words of assurance. Grief without hope is what happens when you have death without resurrection. As Christians, we grieve because death is still a reality, but we grieve in hope because the cross means that death won't get the last word. At "the coming of the Lord", all things will be made new, and our exile from Eden and from God's presence will be permanently repaired. The dead in Christ will rise and will always be with the Lord. Not a separation, but a union. Not a divorce but a wedding. If we are "in Christ" then death is a doorway into a banquet hall where a table is laid for the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9). True, we still grieve, Paul says, but our grief is filled with hope.

From ESV Men's Devo Bible

## **WEEK OF MONDAY NOVEMBER 14TH**

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

**REFLECTION:** What is something that intimidates you about the future?

What do you think it means to live alert but confident?

#### LIVING WITH AN ALERTNESS

God didn't set us up for an angry rejection but for salvation by our Master, Jesus Christ. He died for us, a death that triggered life. Whether we're awake with the living or asleep with the dead, we're alive with him! So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you're already doing this; just keep on doing it. -1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 The Message Translation

What is something that intimidates you about the future?

What do you think it means to live alert but confident?

# **WEEK OF MONDAY NOVEMBER 21ST**

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 - Final Benediction

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and meditate on it this week.

Always be JOYFUL. - "There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice." - John Calvin

How did you find joy this week?

Never stop PRAYING. - "If we think of prayer as the breath in our lungs and the blood from our heart, we think rightly." - Oswald Chambers

What would it look like this week for you to think of prayer as the breath in your lungs?

Be THANKFUL in ALL circumstances - "Thanksgiving will draw our hearts out to God and keep us engaged with him; it will take out attention from ourselves and give the Spirit room in our hearts." - Andrew Murray

Keep a daily gratitude list this week of all that you are thankful for.

My takeaway from 1 Thessalonians is:					



Just as Paul said to the early church of Thessalonica, we are thankful for you. We love the opportunity for us, as a church, to study God's Word together. It's our hope and prayer that this study was an encouragement to you, just as it was intended for the Thessalonians. As you're wrapping up this study, though, we must ask: now what?

As with any study of God's Word, don't just read this book and then walk away. We should be impacted and changed when we encounter God's Word with open and ready hearts. Take time to go back and read this book again. It doesn't take long. Seek His Spirit to point out to you what you need to begin to do to see His Words through this epistle more clearly in your life.

We, like the Thessalonians, are in the stage of waiting for the Lord's glorious return, but we can be active for the kingdom in our waiting. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, let us also work hard, comfort, encourage, live peacefully, be patient, be joyful, never cease in our prayers, hold on to what is good, and flee from evil. Let's encourage those around us to do the same. Finally, let's seek God in every step of our in-between.

We love you church, and are praying for you as we continue on together.

-Van Riggins Spiritual Formations Pastor

