



# WEEK VII

I THESSALONIANS 5

## DAY 1 - MONDAY

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

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

I 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

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*

## 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.*

# FAITHFULLY WAIT FOR HIS RETURN

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:

# ■ NOW WHAT?

---

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**