

# 1 Thessalonians

## Small Group Study Guide

This is an seven-week bible study on 1 Thessalonians. Our goal is to walk our student leaders through this book during the course of a semester. By no means will this outline be all encompassing, but it is a starting point for you to begin with your peer teams.

Paul’s primary goal in writing 1 Thessalonians was to encourage and motivate the spiritual formation and health that was already taking place in Thessalonica. It is extremely applicable to our student leaders because of its emphasis on discipleship, spiritual maturity, and guidance.

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## Week One: Introduction & 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

### Opening Question:

1. What is the best compliment you've ever received?

### Body of this week's study:

*(A general overview of the gospel will need to be given during this week. Basic historical context can be found below, but additional information can be found using a good Study Bible or Bible Dictionary/Encyclopedia.)*

#### *Historical Context of 1 Thessalonians:*

Thessalonica was a major city in Macedonia during Paul's second missionary campaign (Acts 16-18). After being directed by a dream to go to Macedonia, Paul and his companions, Silas and Timothy, visited the city. Thessalonica was a powerful commercial city, and home to a mixed population, including Jews.

Paul gained a few converts during his stay. Unfortunately they were forced to leave by a mob of dissenters, and fled to Berea (Acts 17:1-10). Paul later sends Timothy back to check on the church, and finds that it is flourishing (1 Thess 3:1-6). It is believed that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth a few months after the creation of the Thessalonian church.

Paul's reasons for writing the church are to further expound on teachings that he had already taught them, and to further deepen the roots of an infant church.

#### *Your Explanation:*

It's important to note Paul's reason for writing the Thessalonians. Unlike several of his other letters, one of his primary goals was to applaud how well they were doing. They were open to the Gospel, received it, and began to apply it to their lives. As leaders, it's vital that we encourage those that are applying the gospel to their lives, rather than always focusing on those that are struggling.

This letter also demonstrates how quickly God changed these people. Only a few months before, the Thessalonians were lost. A few months later, they had become models "to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" and later their "faith in God [had] become known everywhere"(v. 8).

**Text Questions:** *Please write your own text questions (in order to shape them according to the needs of your specific group)!*

1. Why do you think Paul chose to open the letter this way?
2. What sticks out to you in this passage?
3. How did the Thessalonians become models for all Macedonian and Achaian believers?

### Application Questions:

1. Who has modeled the Christian life for you and how has it impacted your walk with Christ?
2. Do you feel like you're a good model for your core group?
3. How do you encourage your core group members?
4. How would someone describe your leadership and life? What would you keep and what would you like to change?

**Creative Implementation for the Week/Spiritual Exercise:**

What sort of reputation would you like to have? Be specific. Would you like to be known as a man/woman of prayer? Encouragement? Love? Service? Close your eyes and dream big. Then take a moment to write these desires down and form your own prayer. Ask God to change you on the inside, and make you this type of person. List any scriptures that might coordinate with the desires of your heart.

**Memory Verse:**

"The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia- your faith in God has become known everywhere." – 1 Thess. 1:8

## Week Two: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

**Reminder of the Objective:** 1 Thessalonians is an encouragement to all believers to continue living lives worthy of God. It is a book that reminds the believer of the essentials of the Christian faith.

### Opening Question:

1. Who is your best friend, and why?

### Body of this Week's Study:

This week's passage focuses more extensively on why Paul is writing, and what Paul's interaction with the Thessalonians was like when he visited them. Again, he takes time to applaud their openness to Paul, Silas, and Timothy and the Gospel.

Everything that Paul, Silas, and Timothy did and said in Thessalonica was for the sake of the Gospel. He remarks, "You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:10-12). Our goal as small group leaders and followers of Christ is to do the same. This particular passage guides us through how Paul, Silas, and Timothy reached out and shared the Gospel with those around them.

**Text Questions:** *Please write your own text questions (in order to shape them according to the needs of your specific group)!*

1. How did Paul spread the Gospel?
2. How did they feel about the Thessalonians?
3. Why do you think Paul brought this up?
4. What difficulties were the Thessalonians facing?

### Application Questions:

1. Compared to Paul's description of a faithful Christian worker (he uses himself, Silas, and Timothy as examples), how do you compare?
2. What areas do you excel at? What areas do you need to work on? (in reference to Question 1)
3. How do you love those in your life that you're sharing the Gospel with?

### Creative Implementation for the Week/Spiritual Exercise:

We don't always know how to love and reach out to those around us. But this shouldn't be depressing or overwhelming. God can help us do all things, even the things that seem daunting or impossible.

Write down a few names of people that you would like to love better. How could you do that? Brainstorm a few ways to tangibly show them your love for them. Pray over them, and set goals for the coming week.

**Memory Verse:**

“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”- 1 Thess. 2: 8.

## Week Three: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

**Reminder of the Objective:** 1 Thessalonians is an encouragement to all believers to continue living lives worthy of God. It is a book that reminds the believer of the essentials of the Christian faith.

### Opening Questions:

1. What do you take pleasure in?
2. What do you do when you're having a bad day?

### Body of this Week's Study:

Having left Thessalonica early, Paul was very concerned about the new believers there. In 2:19, he compares them to a "crown" that they will have in the presence of God one day. It is obvious that Paul cared deeply about them.

At the end of the passage, Paul extends his concern for them by praying for them. His heart and attitude were exactly how we should respond to all those around us.

**Text Questions:** *Please write your own text questions (in order to shape them according to the needs of your specific group)!*

1. Why did Paul, Silas, and Timothy leave the Thessalonians?
2. What was Paul afraid of?
3. What was his desire?
4. Why do you think Paul calls them his "hope", "joy", and "crown"?

### Application Questions:

1. What guidelines can you find in Paul's desires and concerns for the Thessalonians that would apply to those that disciple Christians today? And how does this apply to you?
2. What kind of trials are you facing?
3. In what areas do you need encouragement?
4. Paul prays a prayer of blessing over the Thessalonians at the end of this passage. What would you have Paul pray over you? What would you pray over your small group members, friends, or family?

### Creative Implementation for the Week/Spiritual Exercise:

Throughout Scripture, we see prayers of blessing over people or persons. Paul prays a blessing over the Thessalonians at the end of Chapter 3. Take time to think and write down a blessing for your small group. What would you like to see God do in their lives? How would you want someone to bless you?

**Memory Verse:**

“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.”- 1 Thess. 3:12-13

## Week Four: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

**Reminder of the Objective:** 1 Thessalonians is an encouragement to all believers to continue living lives worthy of God. It is a book that reminds the believer of the essentials of the Christian faith.

### Opening Questions:

1. Have you ever tried to do something over and over, and just couldn't do it?
2. If you had to name one thing that you've done in your life that you're most proud of, what would it be?

### Body of this Week's Study:

This week we will be studying a passage where Paul focuses on what it looks like to live a life that pleases God. While he is speaking to a specific situation and church, much that he writes can be applied to our lives. Specifically, he writes about avoiding sexual immorality, living a sanctified holy life, and increasing our brotherly love.

Paul concentrates on real concrete ways for us to live a holy life. But as Dallas Willard, a theologian, puts it, "it is *who we are* in our thoughts, feelings, dispositions, and choices- in the inner life- that counts. Profound transformation there is the only thing that can definitely conquer outward evil"(Renovation of the Heart in Daily Practice, 21).

**Text Questions:** *Please write your own text questions (in order to shape them according to the needs of your specific group)!*

1. According to this passage, what is God's will?
2. What is sanctification?
3. Why do you think Paul chose to address sexual immorality and purity?
4. What does Paul mean when he says, "...that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in a passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God, and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him" (v. 4-6)?
5. What are your thoughts on v. 8?

### Application Questions:

1. How does sanctification and avoiding sexual immorality affect you?
2. How does it affect those around you?
3. In v. 11-12, Paul is writing to a specific situation in Thessalonica. Some of the people in the church were taking advantage of other members and living off of charity. Paul speaks directly to them and tells them to be responsible and develop a good work ethic. How would that apply to us today?
4. What does it look like for you to have a holy and honorable personal life?

**Creative Implementation for the Week/Spiritual Exercise:**

Take a few days or a week to read through one of the gospels. While reading, write down ideas or thoughts to answer this question, "In what ways did Jesus lead an honorable and holy life?". Brainstorm a few ways that you could follow His example.

**Memory Verse:**

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God, and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him"- 1 Thess. 4:3-6

## Week Five: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Reminder of the Objective:** 1 Thessalonians is an encouragement to all believers to continue living lives worthy of God. It is a book that reminds the believer of the essentials of the Christian faith.

### Opening Questions:

1. Have you ever thought about what heaven will be like? Describe.
2. What do you think it will be like to meet Jesus?

### Body of this Week's Study:

We are studying Chapter 4:13-4:18 this week. Next week we'll be talking about Chapter 5:1-11, which is like the second part of Chapter 4. So think about this week as the first part of talking about Christ's return. We'll get into more next week.

Paul spoke about Christ's second coming during his first visit to the Thessalonian church. Unfortunately it caused some confusion and they had questions. The first question they had concerned what would happen to the Christians that had already died when Christ came. The second question was about what would happen to Christians who were alive when Christ came back.

Paul gently reminds them that we are different than those that do not place their hope in Jesus. We have hope in an eternity with Christ so death is not sad, because it is not the end.

**Text Questions:** *Please write your own text questions as well (in order to shape them according to the needs of your specific group)!*

1. What was Paul's purpose in writing this section?
2. What do you think he accomplished with its writing?
3. What did he tell them to do with this information?

### Application Questions:

1. What are your thoughts about Christ's second coming? (In response to their responses, perhaps ask "why?")
2. Why do you think people don't talk about it much?
3. How can you be prepared for Christ's return?

### Creative Implementation for the Week/Spiritual Exercise:

It's often difficult to imagine what it will be like when Christ returns. Again, this week, let's return to scripture and check out what is said about Christ's return. Let's take a look at Mt 24:30-51. Write down your response to this passage. Take time to journal your thoughts to the questions below. Perhaps it would be good to discuss them with a friend as well.

*What will it be like prior to Christ's return?  
What should we do to prepare?  
Does this excite me, or scare me? Why?  
What does this tell us about the Father?*

**Memory Verses:**

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”-  
1 Thess. 4:16-17

## Week Six: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

**Reminder of the Objective:** 1 Thessalonians is an encouragement to all believers to continue living lives worthy of God. It is a book that reminds the believer of the essentials of the Christian faith.

### Opening Questions:

1. Do you like surprises?

### Body of this Week's Study:

This week we'll finish up the topic of Christ's return in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Paul takes a large chunk of the letter to talk about eschatology. It is important to explain why this is to students.

**Text Questions:** *Please write your own text questions as well (in order to shape them according to the needs of your specific group)!*

1. Paul has told the Thessalonians that he does not want them to be uninformed (4:13). He then goes on to tell them about Christ's return. Clearly, God wants us (and the Thessalonians) to understand it. Why do you think that is?
2. What does it mean to be "sons of the light and sons of the day"?
3. Who are those "who are asleep"(5:6)?
4. Who did Christ die for?

### Application Questions:

1. What are the implications of Christ's coming for us?
2. How should you talk about Christ's return with your core group members? Friends? Family?
3. How do people around you view death? Or life? Does your opinion differ from theirs?
4. According to Paul, how should our view of Christ's return shape our lives?

### Creative Implementation for the Week/Spiritual Exercise:

Look up other verses that speak of Christ's return. Also, it would be great to see what Jesus Himself said about His return.

### Memory Verses:

"But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet."- 1 Thess. 5:8

## Week Seven: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

**Reminder of the Objective:** 1 Thessalonians is an encouragement to all believers to continue living lives worthy of God. It is a book that reminds the believer of the essentials of the Christian faith.

### Opening Questions:

1. What do you think it looks like to be a Christian in today's world?

### Body of this Week's Study:

Paul wraps up his letter with a long list of commands. It's obvious that he believes that actions do matter. Actions show others what is really in our hearts.

**Text Questions:** *Please write your own text questions as well (in order to shape them according to the needs of your specific group)!*

1. How do the many commands in this passage relate to Paul's words in v. 23? Is there any connection?
2. Why do you think Paul concludes the letter this way?
3. Why are these commands important?
4. Why do you think Paul prays for sanctification?

### Application Questions:

1. Do any of the commands stick out to you? If so, why?
2. Do you find any of these commands difficult to do?
3. Do you feel like God is sanctifying you? In what ways?

### Creative Implementation for the Week/Spiritual Exercise:

Pair up during small group. Throughout the week, those who pair off are to pray for the other. In times where you might naturally pray for yourself, take time to pray for the other person. This exercise might highlight how often we pray for ourselves, instead of praying for others.

### Memory Verses:

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