

## 9 studies on 1 Thessalonians

Study 1	Acts 17:1-15	evangelism
Study 2	1 Thes 1	gospel
Study 3	1 Thes 2:1-12	motives
Study 4	1 Thes 2:13-16	Word of God
Study 5	1 Thes 2:17 – 3:13	faith and prayer
Study 6	1 Thes 4:1 - 12	holiness and work
Study 7	1 Thes 4:13 - 18	heaven
Study 8	1 Thes 5:1 – 11	The Day of the Lord
Study 9	1 Thes 5:12 - 28	leadership

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### Study 1, Acts 17:1-15

#### INTRODUCTION

1. What sort of teaching (e.g. lectures, film, conversations, question and answer, reading or experiences) is the best way for you to learn?

#### BIBLE STUDY

##### Read Acts 17:1-9

2. What was Paul's strategy for teaching about Jesus (vv1-2)?
3. Paul was in Thessalonica for about 3 weeks (v2).
  - (a) If you only had 3 weeks to teach about Jesus in Narrabeen what would you do?
  - (b) How would that strategy change if you were thinking long term?
4. What was the content of Paul's teaching (vv2-3)?
5. What were the results of Paul's efforts (vv4-5)?

**God-fearing Greeks** = Greeks or Gentiles who had accepted the monotheism and ethical standards of the Jews, and attended synagogue services, but had not become a full proselyte and been circumcised. From The Message of Acts by John R.W. Stott p185.

**Silas** (or Silvanus), a leader of the Jerusalem church who went with Paul on his missionary journeys and acted as his secretary for some of the letters to the churches. From The Lion Handbook to the Bible p 668-669.

6. "he [Paul] reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving . . . proclaiming . . . Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined . . ." (vv2-4)

"we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well" (1 Thes 2:8)

(a) Is Christianity taught or caught?

(b) How does this effect our methods of evangelism?

7. Read Mark 8:31-33 and Acts 17:3 "explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead".

(a) Why was Jesus' death and resurrection such a stumbling block to the Jews, including Jesus' own disciples?

(b) Is it a stumbling block today?

8. What are Paul and his companions accused of teaching (Acts 17:6-7)?

9. What motivated the opposition against Paul and co. (v5)?

10. (a) What opposition do you face, if any, to telling people about Jesus?

(b) What motivates that opposition?

### **Read Acts 17:1-15**

11. What can we find out about the Thessalonian church from Acts 17:1-15 and 1Thes 1:9?

**Timothy**, Paul's young companion and fellow missionary, later with responsibility for the church at Ephesus; Paul sent him letters on the subject of leadership in the churches. From The Lion Handbook to the Bible p 669.

### **CONCLUSION**

12. Given the start the Thessalonians had, what sort of growth do you think might follow, and why?

## Study 2, 1 Thes 1

### INTRODUCTION

1. In your own words give us your definition of the gospel.

### BIBLE STUDY

#### Read 1 Thes ch 1

2. What is the hope we have in Jesus (v3)?

3. How does faith produce work?

How does love prompt labour?

How does hope in Jesus inspire endurance?

4. Think of the things you do in an average week.  
Which of these things are prompted by faith, love and hope?

Which of these things are prompted by obligation, duty and guilt?

Which things are most satisfying?

Can we change our motives for some of these things? How?

5. How does Paul know the Thessalonians really are Christians ("chosen" v4)?

6. How is the gospel (v5) defined in the following 4 passages?

(a) Isaiah 52:7 (good news = gospel)

(b) Rom 1:16-17

(c) 1 Cor 15:1-4

(d) Col 1:21-23

(e) So, what is the gospel?

7. How can this gospel come “not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction” (v5)?
8. Who were the role models for the Thessalonians (v6)?
9. How were they effected by the message of the gospel?
10. How could they be joyful in the midst of suffering?
11. How did that effect others (v7)?
12. What particular aspect made the Thessalonians a model for other churches?
13. What is our church modelled on?
14. Besides Jesus and Paul who has had the greatest influence on your faith since becoming a Christian?
15. How has that influence changed you?

(Perhaps they would be encouraged if you contacted them and let them know this.)

16. Why does Paul use the description “the living and true God” v9?
17. Have you ever “idolised” someone (other than Jesus)? Who?
18. How close is that to “worshipping an idol”?
19. How does Jesus rescue us from the coming wrath (v10)?

## CONCLUSION

20. What have you learnt about role models in this study?

### Study 3, 1 Thes 2:1-12

#### INTRODUCTION

1. What motivates you?

#### BIBLE STUDY

##### Read 1 Thes 2:1-3 and Acts 16:11-40

2. Paul and his companions were in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica. What happened in Philippi that resulted in them suffering and being insulted (1 Thes 2:2)?
3. What was the strong opposition in Thessalonica (read Acts 17:1-9)?
4. What was the appeal they made (1 Thes 2:3)?

##### Read 1 Thes 2:3-12

5. What does it mean for God to test our hearts?
6. What are the impure motives mentioned in the passage?
7. What is the difference between praise and flattery (v5)? Why should we praise people?
8. What are the pure motives that were driving Paul and his friends?
9. Since we all battle with sin in our lives, our motives are not always as pure as they should be. What mixture of motives drives us to do the things we do?
10. Look back over study 2 to get a good definition of the gospel. How does the gospel steer a way forward through the mixed motives that we have to contend with?
11. Why didn't Paul ask for payment for the work he did amongst the Thessalonians?
12. What were their teaching methods?
13. What were they teaching?
14. How do your answers to questions 11 to 13 fit in with what the gospel is all about?

"As Caesar's kingship extended throughout the whole worldwide empire, so **God's kingship extends to every corner of human life**: not because God is a snooping, prying God, but because humans are made in his image, designed to reflect his glory with every facet of their personality. Christian behaviour is not, then, a matter of a few rules made up by a heavenly bureaucrat or policeman, but a matter of reflecting God's glory with every part of life." From Paul for Everyone Galatians and Thessalonians by Tom Wright p 99.

#### CONCLUSION

15. What have you learnt in this study about how the gospel applies to your life?

## Study 4, 1 Thes 2:13-16

### INTRODUCTION

1. Which parts of the Bible do you consider more important or more authoritative than others?

### BIBLE STUDY

#### Read 1 Thes 2:13-16

2. What does Paul continually thank God for?
  
3. How does Paul know that the Thessalonians received the Word of God?
  
4. What claim is Paul making about the value of his (their) teaching (v13)?
  
5. How does this compare with the rest of Scripture? For each of the quotes below state which part(s) of Scripture are being referred to, and its authority.
  - (a) John 10:34-35
  
  - (b) Matt 22:31 and Ex 3:6
  
  - (c) Matt 19:3-6 and Gen 2:24
  
  - (d) John 7:16
  
  - (e) 2 Tim 3:16
  
  - (f) 1 Thes 2:13
  
6. What is the Word of God? Write brief notes on what is meant by the Word of God from each passage and decide which one applies to 1 Thes 2:13.
  - (a) Ps 33:6, Gen 1:3, 6, 9, etc.
  
  - (b) Is 55:11
  
  - (c) Matt 4:4 and Deut 8:3
  
  - (d) John 1:1-14
  
  - (e) 1 Cor 15:1-4

7. In what ways is the Bible also the “word of man”?

“As Christians, we believe that the **Bible is the word of God to man**. By this we mean that:

- the Bible is a book with a divine author that conveys timeless truths.
- the Bible is ‘God-breathed’ (i.e. ‘inspired’).

...

As Christians, we believe that the **Bible is also a human book** in that it was written by human beings in human situations to other human beings in human situations. By this we mean that:

- the Bible is a book with human authors that conveys timeless truths from God couched in human words.
- the authors of the Bible were not mere robots or automatons who lent their hands and pens to God. On the contrary, when each author wrote, he had his own personality, his own history and his own way of expressing himself.
- when each author wrote he did so as a human being of his age, with various preconceptions concerning the nature of man, the world and society. He wrote with the language and idiom of his surroundings to an audience who also held the various preconceptions of their age concerning the nature of man, the world and society.”

From Postcard from Palestine by Andrew Reid pp 15 – 16.

8. How, then, do you read the Bible as the word of God?

9. What does it mean when Paul says the word of God “is at work in you who believe” (v13)?

10. Why do the churches (v14-16) experience suffering because of the Jews?

11. Why do you think the Thessalonians experience suffering from their own countrymen?

12. Where today, do you see Christians being persecuted by their own countrymen?

13. Besides the Jews (v14-15) who else is to blame for Jesus’ death?

## CONCLUSION

14. Do you still consider some parts of the Bible more important or more authoritative than others? Why/why not?

## Study 5, 1 Thes 2:17-3:13

### INTRODUCTION

1. Have you ever waited for someone or something with intense longing? Who or what was it and what were the circumstances?

### BIBLE STUDY

#### Read 1 Thes 2:17-3:5

2. What are Paul's emotions in this passage?
  3. How would you describe Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians?
  4. In 1 Thes 2:18 Paul attributes the blockage to Satan. At other times (read Acts 16:6-10) Paul attributes similar blockages to God. Could both be true? How?
  5. What does it mean for the Thessalonians to be Paul's "glory and joy" (2:20)?
  6. What is Paul worried about in 3:3-5?
  7. How does Paul handle the problem (3:2-3)?
  8. How did you handle the intense longing in question 1?
  9. How can we be strengthened and encouraged in our faith (3:2)?
- “**Faith**’ is, for Paul, partly about our personal trust in God and the gospel; partly about our belief in the central gospel events (the death and resurrection of Jesus); and partly about our continuing faithfulness to the God who had revealed himself in these events and in the gospel message about them. And it is this central, if complex, quality that is likely to be under attack, particularly of course when the church is being persecuted. ‘Can you really’, whisper the voices inside your head, and perhaps the voices of friends or family, ‘can you really trust a God who lets such things happen?’ From Paul for Everyone Galatians and Thessalonians by Tom Wright p 109.
10. Why are we destined for trials (3:3-4, read also John 15:18-21)?



**Read 1 Thes 3:6-13**

11. What is Timothy's news?

12. What effect does it have on Paul and company?

13. In v10 Tom Wright translates the way Paul and his friends pray for the Thessalonians as "even more exceedingly than you can imagine" (from Paul for Everyone Galatians and Thessalonians by Tom Wright p 113). How could we pray like that?

14. What things are lacking in our faith (v10)?

15. What does Paul pray for in v11-13?

**"Paul's prayer was answered**, although only (so far as we know) about five years later when he visited Macedonia twice towards the end of his third missionary journey." See Acts 20:1-4. From The Message of Thessalonians by John R.W. Stott p67.

16. What does v12 remind you of?

**CONCLUSION**

17. Pray v12 and v13 for your Bible study group and St Faiths as a whole.

## Study 6, 1 Thes 4:1-12

### INTRODUCTION

1. What are your ambitions?

### BIBLE STUDY

#### Read 1 Thes 4:1-8

2. Skim read the first 3 chapters of 1 Thessalonians. How is this section, 1 Thes 4:1-8, different?
3. No matter how hard we try, we continue to sin in our everyday lives. God hates sin. How then can we please God (v1)?
4. What instructions does Paul give about holiness?
5. What reasons does Paul give for living this way?
6. How do Paul's instructions relate to the gospel?

#### Read 1 Thes 4:9-12

7. How have we been taught by God to love each other (v9)?
8. How is work an example of brotherly love?
9. What instructions are given in v11?
10. What will this achieve (v12)?
11. Why are these good achievements?
12. Read 2 Thes 3:6-13 and Eph 4:28. What should we say to a Christian who is . . .
  - (a) a workaholic
  - (b) materialistic
  - (c) dishonest with clients
  - (d) unemployed

### SUMMARY

13. What things have you learnt about following God from this study?

## Study 7, 1 Thes 4:13-18

### INTRODUCTION

1. Describe heaven.

### BIBLE STUDY

#### Read 1 Thes 4:13-18

2. One of the reasons for writing this letter was to answer questions on things the Thessalonians weren't too sure about. After reading 1 Thes 4:13-18 as Paul's answer, what do you think their question was?
3. Why is death such a difficult topic to discuss?
4. What does Paul mean by "those who have fallen asleep in him [Jesus]" (v14)?
5. Why doesn't Paul write "died" like "Jesus died" in v14?
6. What will happen to those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, according to this passage?
7. How is Christian grief better than grieving "like the rest of men who have no hope" (v13)?
8. Look at 1 Thes 4:16-17.
  - (a) How much of this is literal and how much is metaphorical?
  - (b) How do you tell which bits are literal and which bits are metaphorical?
  - (c) What is the general message of these 2 verses?

"The expression "**caught up together with them *in the clouds***" [ESV] recalls Jesus' return on a cloud (Dan 7:13, Mk 13:26 and elsewhere) - cloud riding is a symbol of authority in apocalyptic literature. Paul's point is that when Christ's judgement falls on the earth believers will not be dangerously underneath it; instead, they will be with the Judge on the 'cloud'. "In the air" just means at a safe distance from the judgement falling on the world." From 666 and all that p 42 by John Dickson and Greg Clarke.

"**Heaven**, where Jesus is, isn't another location within our space, but another *dimension*. The language of 'descending' is the risky metaphor – all metaphors are risky when talking of the future – that Paul here chooses. Elsewhere (e.g. Col 3:4) he can speak simply of Jesus 'appearing', emerging from the presently hidden world of heaven, as heaven and earth are at last united, visibly present to one another." From Paul for Everyone Galatians and Thessalonians by Tom Wright p 125.

"[W]e can come up with some **basic rules of interpretation for this [apocalyptic] genre**. For example: DON'T ... take everything too literally.

DO ... become familiar with the meaning of the symbols used, both in terms of their contemporary usage and their Biblical background.

DO ... try and understand the idea/s being conveyed through the symbols.

DO ... study the historical background of the writings." From Postcard from Palestine by Andrew Reid p 48.

### CONCLUSION

9. How is this passage encouraging (v18)?
10. Have your ideas about heaven changed? If so, how?

**Study 8, 1 Thes 5:1-11****INTRODUCTION**

1. What is meant by "The Day of the Lord"?

**BIBLE STUDY****Read 1 Thes 5:1-11**

2. Look up the following 4 passages and write what is meant by the day of the Lord.  
(a) Ps 118:19-24

(b) Joel 2:28-32

(c) Amos 5:18-20

(d) Phil 1:3-6

(e) How does Jesus fulfil each of these?

3. Jesus warned against speculating about the day of his return (Mark 13:32 and Acts 1:7) but why have people always been so keen to predict it?

4. How will the Second Coming be like (a) a thief (vv2, 4)?

(b) a woman in labour (v3)?

5. (a) What does it mean to belong to the day/light?

(b) How does this determine how we live as the Day approaches?

6. What does “asleep” mean in v6 compared to “asleep” in 1 Thes 4:14?
  
7. (a) What does it mean to “put on” things (v8)?  
  
(b) What things do we “put on” (see also Eph 6:10-18)?
  
8. Some of the Thessalonians may have been worried about the return of Jesus because they were afraid of suffering judgement. What things in this passage re-assure Christians of salvation, not judgement?
  
9. (a) How does Paul want the Thessalonians to encourage each other and build each other up (v11)?  
  
(b) What other ways can we encourage each other?

## CONCLUSION

10. “I don’t need to go to a counsellor, I just read my Bible.”
  - (a) What is right about this statement?
  
  - (b) What is wrong about this statement?
  
  - (c) When is it necessary to seek professional counselling?
  
  - (d) How is encouragement like counselling?

## Study 9, 1 Thes 5:12-28

### INTRODUCTION

1. Think of the best leader you have ever known personally. Why was he or she such a good leader?

### BIBLE STUDY

#### Read 1 Thes 5:12-22

2. What are the responsibilities of leadership according to
  - (a) 1 Thes 5:12-13
  - (b) Luke 22:24-27
  - (c) Rom 12:3-8
  - (d) 1 Tim 3:1-12
  - (e) Heb 13:17-18
  - (f) 1 Pet 5:1-3
2. What are the responsibilities of the people who are being led according to
  - (a) 1 Thes 5:12-13
  - (b) Heb 13:17-18
3. Why do Christians and Christian leaders sometimes find it hard to “live in peace with each other” (v13)?
4. Paul may be summing up his teaching on work (4:9-12), death (4:13-18) and judgement (5:1-11), and sexual self control (4:3-8) when he writes “warn those who are idle, encourage the timid [or faint hearted], help the weak” (5:14).
  - (a) What attitudes does Paul encourage in 5:14-15?
  - (b) What additional attitudes does Paul encourage in 1 Cor 13:4-7?
  - (c) What sort of people (or problems that people have that) make you impatient (5:14)?
5.
  - (a) What alternative does Paul suggest for paying back wrong for wrong (5:15)?
  - (b) Why is this so hard?
  - (c) What problems can be avoided by following your answer to (a)?
6. Being joyful always, praying continually and giving thanks in all circumstances is pretty hard to do yet Paul says this is God’s will (vv16-18). Maybe this is the ideal but how do we attempt to do each of these in practise?
  - (a) be joyful

(b) prayer

(c) give thanks

7. How can we make sure we “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (v19 NIV) or “Do not quench the Spirit” (v19 ESV)?

“This prohibition comes right in the middle of the other exhortations. It could therefore apply either to those which precede it or to those which follow it. We might read, ‘Rejoice in the Lord, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, do not quench the Spirit’. Or we could read, ‘Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophecies, but test everything, cling to the good, abstain from the evil.’ In fact, I see no reason why we should not do both. In that case, Paul is saying ‘Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through his word, and listen to his voice; do not quench him’, and also “Let the Holy Spirit move you to respond to the word in praise, prayer and thanksgiving; do not quench him.” From The Message of Thessalonians by John R.W. Stott p131.

8. How can we make sure we don’t treat prophecies with contempt?

**What is prophecy in the New Testament?** Tony Payne interviewed Peter Jensen and Peter O’Brien in an article on prophecy in The Briefing #170/171 5/12/1995 entitled “1 and 2 Peter on prophecy” where they reached the conclusion that prophecy today is “informal, spontaneous, open-to-many edification of one another in the application of the Word.”

9. With what standard do we test things and determine what is good or evil (vv 21-22)?

10. Why is personal Bible reading important? Why not let others tell you it means and how to apply it e.g. in sermons and books?

#### **Read 1 Thes 5:12-22**

11. What has holiness got to do with the gospel?

12. How much do our Christian lives depend on God’s faithfulness and how much depends on our own efforts at being faithful?

13. How are the last 4 verses like Acts 2:42, when the church had just begun?

“The form which **kissing** takes varies considerably from culture to culture. It may involve the use of our hands, arms, mouths, cheeks or noses. Or the custom of our country may be to stand back and bow, without any bodily contact. Yet the apostle’s instruction is clear that when Christians meet each other they should greet each other, and that their verbal greeting should be made stronger, warmer and more personal by a culturally appropriate sign.” From The Message of Thessalonians by John R.W. Stott p134.

14. How much is our church like the early church?

#### **CONCLUSION**

15. What was the most memorable thing you’ve learnt or experienced in doing these studies this term?

16. Looking back over these studies what is the most significant thing you can apply to your life in the times ahead?