

**Bible Studies on**

# **1 Thessalonians**

**6 studies**

**Leaders Notes**

**Study 1: Overview of 1 Thessalonians**

**Study 2: 1 Thess. 1:1-10**

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**Study 4: 1 Thess. 2:17-3:13**

**Study 5: 1 Thess. 4:1-12 & 5:12-28**

**Study 6: 1 Thess. 4:13-18 & 5:1-11**

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## **Leaders Notes**

*These will hopefully help you understand some of the more interesting sections of 1 Thessalonians, but they are in no way complete. Please see commentary list at the end.*

*For each study you will see some brief leaders notes/suggestions marked by the right pointing arrow. Enjoy teaching 1 Thessalonians.*

### **Leaders Notes for Study 1**

- *Hopefully this study is fairly self-explanatory. We are seeking to get people into the letter without seeking to make things too concrete yet. Attached is an English Standard Version (ESV) print out of the whole of 1 Thessalonians (less the chapter headings). You may like to bring coloured textas/ pencils for people to use. Themes would include: salvation, faith, hope, love, word/gospel, living to please God/ blameless/ holy, last days/ Jesus return, Paul's model of ministry.*
- *To help the group prepare for the next study, please get 1 person to volunteer to share their testimony at the end of next week's study.*
- *Encourage people to prepare at least the first page of study 2.*

## Study 1

### Overview of 1 Thessalonians

Read the whole of 1 Thessalonians.

While you do - answer the following questions.

(You may wish to read each chapter and then discuss the answers as you go.)

1. What do you learn about the identity, character and actions of:

<b>Paul and Co.</b>	
<b>The Thessalonians</b>	
<b>God</b>	
<b>Jesus</b>	
<b>Holy Spirit</b>	

2. What is the tone of the letter?

3. What are the main themes that are covered in the letter? How do you see this?

4. What questions do you have?

Spend some time praying for each other.

Get 1 person to volunteer to share their conversion story next week.

*Next week's study: 1 Thess. 1: 1-10*

## Leaders Notes for Study 2

- You may like to get different people to look up the passages on Paul, Silvanus and Timothy.
- See the map below for place locations.



## Study 2

### 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Pray for your time together.

**Read 1 Thess. 1:1-10 and Acts 17:1-15**

1. Who are Paul, Silvanus and Timothy? (you may like to refer to Acts 22:1-21, 15:22,32 and 16:1-5)
2. What do the 2 passages tell us about circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Thessalonian church?
3. On the map insert Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Macedonia and Achaia.



[www.bible-history.com/maps](http://www.bible-history.com/maps)

### **Verses 2-3**

4. For what does Paul give thanks?
  
5. What practical responses to the gospel have the Thessalonians demonstrated?
  
6. What do these verses tell us about Christian faith, hope and love?
  
7. Thinking back over the time you've been a Christian - what practical responses to the gospel have you seen in your life?
  
8. Thinking about your church - what areas of faith, love and hope can you be thankful to God for?

Spend some time praying in thanks for these things.

### **Verses 4-10**

**Read verses 4-10 again.**

9. What different ways does the passage describe the salvation of the Thessalonians?

V5

V6

V9

V10

10. Why is Paul so certain of their salvation?
  
11. How have the Thessalonians imitated Paul and the Lord?
  
12. How have you benefited from these and other Christian role models?
  
13. What has been the outcome of the Thessalonians salvation for those around them?  
Why do you think it has become so widely known?
  
14. What do we learn about *the second coming* of Jesus from this passage? (stay tuned for more in chapter 4 and 5)
  
15. Think again about your own Christian life - in what ways would others know you were a Christian? What areas do you need to work at?

Get the volunteer from last week to share how they came to faith in Christ.

Pray thanking God for his work in their life and asking Him to continue to grow your Christian influence on others.

*Next Week: 1 Thess. 2:1-16*

## Leaders Notes for Study 3

- *Re the question on financial self-sufficiency - you may like to leave this one if time is getting away. Maybe just refer people to the other verses.*
- *Verses 13-16. These have some difficult bits so I have tried to get the gist in the main questions and then added more detail in the extension questions. Decide whether you use them based on your group and your time. At the end of these notes you will find a summary of the commentaries I read.*
- *Verse 14 the Thessalonians have suffered from those around them for being Christians as had the churches in Judea. We don't know exactly what Paul was referring to about the suffering of the Judean churches (other than it was from the Jews). It may refer back to the persecution Paul himself was involved in perpetrating or a more recent time of persecution.*
- *Verse 15 - Paul launches into a strong attack on the Jews. People have found this hard to match with Romans 9-11 where Paul desires the salvation of the Jews but even in Romans Paul points out that the majority of the Jews are against God and only the remnant will be saved. This negative attack is to be read in the context of the persecution Paul and the Thessalonians faced - he is not being anti-Semitic. Paul gives 6 reasons for his attack on the Jews - 1) they killed the Lord Jesus, 2) killed the prophets, 3) drove Paul out, 4) displease God, 5) hostile to mankind and 6) hindered the proclamation of salvation. Paul is critiquing the Jewish opposition to God's mission as it is hostile to all humankind in that it prevents the Gentiles from hearing of the hope of salvation.*
- *Verse 16b – this affirmation is a conclusion to all that has been said previously. It echoes a theme that reappears a number of times through the Bible. That is, the sins of a people come up to their complete measure before divine judgment is poured out on them (c.f. Gen 15:16, Dan 8:23, Mat 23:31-32). Paul announces here that the Jews sins have come to the full measure with the definite outcome that 'the wrath of God has come upon them at last'. What does 'has come upon' them mean? It can mean 'has just arrived/ arrived' but grammatically it most likely means 'came upon'. So, although it appears to refer to a current expression of God's wrath, the verb could also demonstrate the completeness and certainty of God's wrath thus referring to the future destruction of the temple in AD70 or Jesus return.*

## Study 3

### 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

When you think of Christian leaders who have had a large impact on you what is it that stands out about them?

#### **Read 1 Thess. 2:1-12**

In 1:4 Paul wrote of what he *knew* of the Thessalonians. In this chapter he writes of what they *knew* of him.

1. What do the Thessalonians know of Paul in this section? (v1, 5, 11)

#### Verses 1-6

2. Why could Paul and co have been timid?
3. Why were they bold in declaring the gospel?
4. What do we learn of their motivation and its impact?
5. In your context, when are you tempted to please people not God?

#### Verses 7-8

6. What surprises you about the analogy Paul uses?
7. What does Paul's description of his ministry reveal here?

### **Verses 9-12**

8. What does Paul remind them of here:

- about his manner
- about his message?

How are the two related?

9. Many people badmouth Paul for being angry, argumentative and harsh. How would this chapter help you answer such a critic?

10. Paul writes here of his financial self-sufficiency. Should this be the norm for ministers? See also Phil 4:15-16, 1 Cor 9:7-14, 1 Tim 5:17-18.

Pray giving thanks for Paul and his method/ message and for Christian leaders you know who have exhibited a similar boldness, clarity and way of life.

### **Verses 13-16**

**Read again verses 13-16.**

11. How does Paul change focus here?

12. What is similar to chapter 1:4-7 and what extra details do we get about:

a) the Thessalonians salvation and

b) their suffering?

13. Paul uses the example of the suffering of the churches in Judea. Even though we don't know all the history what is the impact of the comparison?

14. Why is Paul so concerned about the opposition from the Jews?

15. In what ways have you suffered because of your Christian faith?

16. How have you seen the Word of God at work in yourself?

***Extension Questions for verses 13-16***

Paul uses some strong and confusing statements here.

- In what way can verse 16b be seen as a summary of v15-16a?
- How does Jesus say a similar thing in Matthew 23:31-36?
- Why do we balk at v16c?
- What does Paul say about the wrath of God (c.f. v16c, 1:10, 5:9 and 2 Thess 1:6-8)?

*Next week: 1 Thess. 2:17- 3:13*

## **Leaders Notes for Study 4**

- *In Verse 18 we don't know how Satan stopped Paul's return to the Thessalonians. What is clear is that Paul believes in the active working of the devil.*
- *Verses 19-20 Paul then demonstrates his high esteem for this church. Usually, the Bible speaks of hope in God but here Paul speaks of his hope being the Thessalonians. The hope is in the expectation of presenting them before Christ when he returns. The Thessalonians will be and are already their joy (v19, 20). Again, there is an expectation of the joy to be felt at the coming of Christ due to this church. The Thessalonians are also the crown of boasting or crown in which we glory - presumably at some level picking up the concept of the athletic crown of the day. Rather than boasting in the Lord here, Paul boasts in this church - not their achievements but themselves. He looks forward to presenting these Christians, whom he saw converted, before Jesus on his return. He is confident that despite their struggles they will continue and his present joy will be completed on that day.*
- *1Thess 3:10 Paul majors on how well the church is doing but has this passing comment about supplying what is lacking in their faith. This is not a 'salvation faith' matter but rather his realisation that in the short time he had with them he wasn't able to give them instructions on a range of areas - sexuality, love, work, the last days, Christ's return. He covers some of these in his letter, but he is also keen to see them again to move them on in their maturity in Christ.*

## Study 4

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

#### **Read 1 Thess. 2:17-3:5**

1. How is Paul's affection for the Thessalonians expressed in this section?
2. What do you think it mean that the Thessalonians are 'our hope or joy or crown of boasting' and 'our glory and joy'? What do the time references in verses 19-20 add to our understanding of these phrases?
3. What was the purpose of Timothy's visit to them?
4. Why was Paul fearful for their faith?
5. How has suffering affected your faith?
6. What do you think are the greatest threats to your faith?

#### **Read 1 Thess. 3:6-10**

7. What news has Timothy brought to Paul?
8. What is Paul's passionate response?

9. Three times Paul has given thanks for them. What are the reasons for his thankfulness each time:

1:2-3

2:13

3:8-10

How could these help you pray for your fellow Christians?

10. What does Paul mean he needs to supply what is lacking in their faith?

**Read 1 Thess. 3:11-13**

Pauls reflects another prayer to God here.

11. For what does he pray:

3:11

3:12

3:13

12. What do we already know of the Thessalonians love?

13. What will be the outcome of their increasing and abounding love?

14. What future does Paul anticipate for them?

In this section Paul has focussed on their faith and love.

15. How could you be more concerned for the faith of Christians you know?

16. How have you seen your love changing as a Christian? Is it currently increasing or decreasing? How could you work at seeing it grow further?

Spend some time praying for each other in your group using this section's concerns for faith and love as a guide.

*Next week: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 & 5: 12-28*

## **Leaders Notes for Study 5**

- *Through this study it is important to keep the dual focuses on a) what God has achieved for/ in them and b) what Paul is instructing them to do/ be. The first few questions seek to raise this balance, but you may need to keep it on the agenda throughout the study.*
- *Verses 3-8, I think it is much easier for us to apply this section to others but we need to apply it ourselves also. Depending on your group, work out how much time or depth of sharing you want to do here.*
- *Verses 19-21 is another thorny little section. Important to look at it but it isn't the main focus of the passage or study. 'Quenching the Spirit' is often taken to show that the Thessalonians were at the opposite end of the scale to the Corinthian church in regards spiritual gifts etc. This is possible but unlikely as here again it does not use any words to refer to 'gifts'. It more likely refers to the work of the Spirit in their sanctification/ fruits of the Spirit kind of idea - as that is what Paul has just been writing about. So probably refers to the instructions he has just given them.*
- *The prophecies referred to are most likely those that Paul has already hinted at in the section we haven't studied (4:15, 5:3). So next week, we will pick up more detail on what Paul and others had been saying about Jesus' return and how Paul thinks they should respond to those various teachings.*

## **Study 5**

### **1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 & 5:12-28**

1. Read 1 Thess. 4:1-12 & 5:12-28. What is the overall impression of these sections?

#### **Read 1 Thess. 4:1-3a and 5:23-24**

2. What is Paul exhorting them to?
3. What is God's purpose for them?
4. What does Paul teach about the Thessalonians' role and God's role?
5. How are we as a church and you personally tempted to emphasise one over the other?

Pray that we'll keep the balance as we look at the rest of the section.

#### **Read 1 Thess. 4:3-12 again**

#### **Verses 3-8**

6. What is Paul writing against? What different ways does he describe it?
7. How is Paul urging them to live? What different ways does he describe it?
8. How does Paul underline the seriousness of this issue?

9a. For men: What strikes you from this passage? What area does this challenge you in?  
(You may not want to share some things in this context – who would be an appropriate person to talk about his stuff with?)

9b. For women: It is easy to jump to applying this to men generally or to husbands - but for you as a Christian woman or wife where does this strike you? What areas does this challenge you in? (You may not want to share some things in this context but do find someone to talk about them with)

### **Verses 9-12**

10. How does he encourage them in this section?

11. Who has taught them this love?

12. Paul urges them not to be complacent. How are they to continue to demonstrate their love?

13. What are the reasons he gives for these things?

14. What do you think this would look like in your context?

**Read 1 Thess. 5:12-22**

15. In verse 12-14, what do we learn about the responsibilities of Christian leaders?
  
16. How are they to be treated?
  
17. Given that this is very un-Australian - how could we demonstrate this attitude?
  
18. Verses 14-22 give a range of instructions. Which instructions stand out to you? Can you identify 1-2 linking themes?
  
19. What questions do you have about those themes?
  
20. Verses 19-21 can cause some difficulty. How would ignoring Paul's instructions be 'quenching the Spirit'?
  
21. How should they respond to prophecies? (note: in the rest of chapters 4 & 5 he has taught them about the last days and what various people have taught them. This reference to prophecy may well relate to that teaching)

Read again 1 Thess. 4:1-3a and 5:23-24 and pray for each other in a similar way.

*Next week: 1 Thessalonians 4:13- & 5:1-11*

## **Leaders Notes for Study 6**

- *Both of the sections we look at in this study refer to the timing of the Jesus' return, but in slightly different ways.*
- *In chapter 4 he seems concerned with their anxiety about those who have already died. In chapter 5 he is concerned that they be ready when Jesus returns not slumbering.*
- *Both sections are written for the encouragement of one another (4:18, 5:11) and so should be read in that light.*
- *Try to allow time for people to reflect back on our study of all of 1 Thessalonians and to pray for what they have learnt.*

## Study 6

### 1 Thessalonians 4:13- 18 & 5:1-11

1. What you believe about death becomes clear at funerals. What differences have you seen between the funerals of Christians and non-Christians?

#### **Read 1 Thess. 4:13-18**

2. What appears to be Paul's concern for the Thessalonians?
3. What does he teach about:
  - the Christians who have already died?
  - those who are alive at Christ's return?
  - the foundation for these beliefs?
4. What picture of the return of Christ is given?
5. Paul seems to assume that Christ's return will be soon when he wrote - does the fact that 2000 years have passed invalidate these teachings? Why? Why not?
6. What do you find encouraging about this section? How could you encourage others with it?

#### **Read 1 Thess. 5:1-11**

7. How does Paul change his focus slightly?

8. How does he use the following metaphors/ analogies to make his point?

- Labour pains
- Darkness/ light (day/ night)
- Sober/ drunk

How would you summarise his point?

9. In verses 8-10 how does Paul call them to live and why?

10. What has Paul already taught them about

- faith
- love
- hope?

11. What do you find encouraging about this section? How could you encourage others with it?

12. What 2 things have challenged/ encouraged you most in our study of 1 Thessalonians?

Share some of these and spend some time praying for each other about these things as well as things for the summer break.

## Commentaries

➤ *For further reference or study the commentaries I used were:*

Green, Gene L.        *The Letters to the Thessalonians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. WB Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002.

Morris, Leon        *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Tyndale, New Testament Commentaries. Intersity Press: Leicester, 1984 (reprint 1994).

➤ *Although I did not refer to this, you may also find this commentary useful:*

Stott, John        *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians – preparing or the coming King*. Bible Speaks Today. Intersity Press: Leicester, 2021 (revised edition).

## 1 Thessalonians (ESV)<sup>1</sup>

1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. 9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. 3 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed- God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 9 For you remember, brothers, our labour and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 11 For you know how, like a father with his children, 12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. 13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. 14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess 1-5 in *The Holy Bible* - English Standard Version. Wheaton: Crossway, 2001.

Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved- so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last! 17 But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavoured the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, 18 because we wanted to come to you- I, Paul, again and again- but Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

3:1 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's co-worker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, 3 that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. 4 For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. 5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labour would be in vain. 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you- 7 for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. 8 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, 10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? 11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, 12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, 13 so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

4:1 Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. 9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, 10 for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to

do this more and more, 11 and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one. 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

5:1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 12 We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. 15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil. 23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. 25 Brothers, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. 27 I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.