

PERSPECTIVE

Insights from 1 and 2 Thessalonians

MELANIE NEWTON

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Melanie Newton is the author of “Graceful Beginnings” books for anyone new to the Bible and “Joyful Walk Bible Studies” for established Christians. Her mission is to help women learn to study the Bible for themselves and to grow their Bible-teaching skills to lead others. For questions about the use of the study guide, please visit melanienewton.com to contact us.

Joyful Walk Bible Studies are grace-based studies for women of all ages. Each study guide follows the inductive method of Bible study (observation, interpretation, application) in a warm and inviting format. We pray that you and your group will find *Perspective* a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with Him.

Christ-Focused...Grace-Based...Bible-Rich

1: Overview of 1 and 2 Thessalonians

DAY ONE STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

The ABCs of 1 and 2 Thessalonians—Author, Background, and Context

Like any book you read, it always helps to know a bit about the author, the background setting for the story (i.e., past, present, future), and where the book fits into a series (that's the context). The same is true of Bible books.

AUTHOR

Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter written to the church of the Thessalonians. Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, was born in Tarsus, a major Roman city on the coast of southeast Asia Minor. Tarsus was the center for the tent-making industry. Paul was trained in that craft as his occupation (his primary paying profession). As a Jewish Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin, Paul was educated at the feet of Gamaliel, a well-respected rabbi of the day. Paul was an ardent persecutor of the early church until his life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ.

After believing in Jesus Christ as his Savior, Paul was called by Christ to take the gospel to the Gentiles. This was an amazing about-face for a committed Pharisee like Paul who ordinarily would have nothing to do with Gentiles. He founded numerous churches and wrote 13 letters that are included in the New Testament. Tradition has it that Paul was beheaded shortly after he wrote 2 Timothy in 67 AD. (*Adapted from Acts 8:3; 9:1-31; 22:3-5; 26:9-11; and Galatians 1:11-24.*)

BACKGROUND

Located in northern Greece, Thessalonica was founded in 315 BC. Over time, it became an important urban center because of its strategic location near the Aegean Sea. In the Roman Empire, it was the capital of the province of Macedonia and its largest city with 200,000 people. Thessalonica stood on the *Via Egnatia*, the Roman version of an interstate highway, making it an important city of commerce. In Paul's day, it was a self-governing community with enough Jews in residence to warrant a synagogue (Acts 17:1).

While Paul was in Troas on his second missionary journey, God showed him a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us." Paul and Silas went, stopping first at Philippi, where they preached the gospel, and a church was formed. After spending a night in prison for driving an evil spirit from a girl, Paul and Silas were forced to leave Philippi. They went about 100 miles west to Thessalonica.

For at least three Sabbath days, Paul reasoned in the synagogue with those present, and many believed the gospel. Because of all that he accomplished in Thessalonica, he probably ministered for a longer time than just three weeks. Several Jews and many God-fearing Greeks believed, including some leading women of the city. This angered a group of unbelieving Jews who then stirred up trouble for Paul. So the Thessalonian Christians sent Paul, Silas, and Timothy away from the city by night to Berea, 50 miles to the west.

Paul and his party began their evangelistic work in Berea in the synagogue, as was their custom, and many people there believed. Sadly, the Thessalonian Jews traveled to Berea and stirred up more trouble for Paul. So, the Berean Christians sent Paul away to Athens (southern Greece). But Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. While in Athens, Paul wrote to Silas and Timothy, asking them to join him there. But he soon sent Silas back to Philippi and Timothy back to Thessalonica to continue discipling those churches. Then, Paul moved to Corinth. Silas and Timothy rejoined him there, bringing a financial gift from the Christians in those Macedonian (northern Greece) towns. Timothy's report of conditions in the Thessalonian church led Paul to write the first letter from Corinth about 51 AD. Then, he wrote the second letter within 6-12 months after the first letter.

Here is a possible timeline (a best guess based on available information):

Church founded	Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica	Paul in Corinth	Timothy came with news from Thessalonica	News received
<i>Acts 17:1-15</i>	<i>1 Thessalonians 3:2</i>	<i>Acts 18:1-5</i>	<i>1 Thessalonians written and sent</i>	<i>2 Thessalonians written and sent</i>
Fall/Winter 50-51	Spring 51	Summer 51	Fall 51	Winter/Spring 52

CONTEXT

Even though you will find 1 and 2 Thessalonians after the book of Colossians in the New Testament, the Thessalonian letters were written much earlier. In fact, they are considered to be some of the earliest of Paul's writings. Only Galatians was likely written before them. Because of the short time between the writing of the 2 letters to the Thessalonians, it makes sense to study them together as we'll be doing.

1. What grabbed your attention as you read the ABC's of the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians?

2. Read Acts 17:1-15. What do you learn from these verses about Paul's experience in Thessalonica?
 - Vv. 1-4—

 - Vv. 5-10, 13—

- What events and people would still be fresh in his mind just a few months later when he wrote the letters?

Scriptural Insight: Paul's reasoning "persuaded some" in the synagogue services. His converts seem to have been mainly Gentiles, many of whom were God-fearers, or "God-fearing Greeks," but some of them were Jews. "Jason" (v. 5), Aristarchus, and Secundus appear to have been among these new believers. The "leading women" could have belonged to the upper classes, or they may have been the wives of the city's leading men. In either case, the gospel had an impact on the leadership level of society in Thessalonica. ... Three converts from Thessalonica—Sopater, Aristarchus (Acts 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10), and Secundus (Acts 20:4)—later traveled with Paul (Acts 20:4). Aristarchus stayed with Paul during his Caesarean imprisonment and traveled with him all the way to Rome. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Acts 2020 Edition*, adapted from pp. 347, 350, 481)

Gain Perspective

You have probably heard the phrase, "You need to gain perspective." But what is perspective? According to the dictionary:

Perspective is an objective assessment of any situation, giving all aspects their comparative importance.

Objective assessment. Looking at all the issues and facts. That sounds like a necessary action to take whenever you must make a decision, doesn't it? We all need perspective to help us successfully navigate through the challenges of daily life.

Gaining perspective is like sharpening your focus with a lens. When you have trouble seeing, and you go to an optometrist to get your eyes checked, you come away with a prescription for glasses or contacts that will enable your eyes to focus again. When you put on those new lenses, what was once a blur has now become clear. That's what happens when you gain perspective.

Sharpening your focus not only clears up blurry vision, but it can also help us to see something at a distance that we were not able to see. Consider how a pair of binoculars works. Let's say you are driving down a highway to get to the mountains. You go around a curve, and there they are in the distance. You get excited about your journey there. But you need help to see them. So, you pull out a pair of binoculars and focus on the mountain peaks in the distance. You get a glimpse of where you are heading.

That's what Paul's letters to the Thessalonian Christians helped them to do. They gained perspective about a bunch of things.

Biblical perspective on life is God's perspective on life. Paul helped the Thessalonians gain God's perspective on the persecution they were suffering at the hands of their neighbors.

Having the biblical perspective about suffering helps you to stand firm and press onward regardless of obstacles in your life.

Biblical perspective on life helps you grow in confidence because you learn that your self-worth is not derived from any human being but from God. This gives you stability, certainty, and confidence in your God who is faithful to you. Others will notice and be benefited by this.

The Thessalonians had questions about death and the future. Biblical perspective about that gives you hope and assurance of your future with Christ in eternity. You will not fear death as those who have no hope. And if you like eschatology (prophecy about the end times, especially Jesus' return), you will enjoy Paul's letters to the Thessalonians. As you study Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, you will gain some perspective on the future that God has planned for all believers as well as for human history. One-fourth of 1 Thessalonians and nearly half of 2 Thessalonians deal with the coming of Christ from heaven for His own and the Great Tribulation on earth that will occur afterwards. You will gain perspective on the end times and how to view evil in the present. We will enjoy our time of discovery when we get to those passages.

Knowing the future hope gives you God's perspective on life that you need in your world today. For now, you must live and work in this world. Paul's letters to the Thessalonians have a lot to say about your daily life, including your work. You can view work as worship and see purpose in it when you gain God's perspective.

When you gain the biblical perspective on who God is, what it means to live your life to please Him, and what He has planned for your future, you get a security in Him that allows you to rest and enjoy life today. Who wouldn't want that kind of security? And you will be able to serve God with greater enthusiasm and freedom to impact your world for Him.

3. In what areas of your life do you need perspective right now?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE OF 1 THESSALONIANS

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

In all of our *Joyful Walk Bible Studies*, we follow the inductive process for Bible Study. The inductive process starts with observation, looking carefully at what the text actually says. ***What does the Bible say?*** The next step is interpretation, which is trying to understand the author's intended meaning—to him and to the audience who would read or hear it. ***What does it mean?***

Once you know what the Bible says and what it means, then you are ready for application, which is learning how to live this out in your life. **What application will you make?** When you follow the inductive process for Bible Study, you will be able to confidently dwell in that truth.

What does the Bible say? (This is the “Observation” step in the process of Bible Study.)

Where do we begin? Have you ever heard the saying, “You can’t see the forest for the trees?” The best way to study any book of the Bible is to begin with the “forest” (survey the whole) and then proceed to the “trees” (the individual parts). We will start by getting an overview of what Paul wrote in his letters to the Thessalonians. Since they were written so close together in time, we will read them both this week to get the continuity of thought. We will read them as they were intended—a letter from one dear friend to another.

Today, read the letter called 1 Thessalonians at one sitting. It will take about 12 minutes. You can read the letter in any translation of the Bible you choose. Feel free to mark anything that grabs your attention and look for the main topics. Then, answer the questions below.

4. What one thing do you remember most from your reading of this letter?

5. What would you say were the main subjects that Paul covered in this letter?

6. What issues seem to be bothering the Thessalonian church?

7. What questions do you have after reading 1 Thessalonians that you would like to have answered in this study? [Note: You will NOT know when Jesus is coming back.☺]

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE OF 2 THESSALONIANS

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say? (This is the “Observation” step in the process of Bible Study.)

Today, you will read the letter called 2 Thessalonians at one sitting. It will take about 7 minutes. You can read the letter in any translation of the Bible you choose. Feel free to mark anything that grabs your attention and look for repeated topics or phrases. Then, answer the questions below.

8. What subjects did you see in this letter that you also read in 1 Thessalonians?

What does it mean? (This is the “Interpretation” step in the process of Bible Study.)

9. One of the major themes in both letters is the appearing of Christ. We’ll cover these verses in more detail as we get to them in the lessons. Right now, read them to get an overview.

- Every chapter of 1 Thessalonians ends with a reference to His appearance. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:13-17; and 5:23-24. From what you just read, what grabbed your attention?

- In 2 Thessalonians, 18 of the 47 verses deal with future events. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 and 2:1-2. From what you just read, what grabbed your attention?

10. Another theme shared by 1 and 2 Thessalonians is thankfulness. During difficult times, it is hard to be thankful. Read the following verses and record the reasons Paul found to thank God.

- 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3—
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13—

- 1 Thessalonians 3:9—
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18—
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4—
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14—

Focus on the Meaning: Firstfruits referred to the beginning of a harvest. All those first century believers were firstfruits of the gospel. We are part of the rest of the harvest.

What application will you make to gain perspective? (This is the “Application” step in the process of Bible Study.)

11. As Paul found reasons to thank God in the midst of very challenging times, you can do the same. Write several reasons that you can be thankful today.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today. Ask God to show you answers to your questions and what He wants you to learn through this study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

2: Perspective on the Gospel

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

What does the Bible say? (This is the “Observation” step of Bible Study.)

Let's start digging into this wonderful letter from God to us. For every lesson, we will begin with reading the whole passage to get the big picture before we study the verses more closely.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) anything repeated in this passage. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

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 from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. 6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. 9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to 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, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1. What grabbed your attention from vv. 1-10?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.

4. **Gain perspective:** From this lesson's passage (1:1-10), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean? (This is the "Interpretation" step of Bible Study.)

Today, we will focus on vv. 1-8. We'll cover vv. 9-10 in the Day Three Study.

5. Look at vv. 1-2. This is called the "salutation." In ancient letters, the salutation included both the letter writer and the recipient's name.

- The letter was from Paul. Who was with Paul?
- Who were the recipients?

From the Greek: "Silvanus" was the Roman (Latin) form of his name, which Paul preferred over "Silas," the Jewish (Aramaic) form. Luke used "Silas" (Acts 15:22). Silas and Timothy were Paul's primary associates on his second missionary journey, during which the church at Thessalonica came into existence (Acts 15:40). (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 11)

6. Paul usually began his letters with the greeting “grace and peace to you.” Grace (Greek, *charis*) was a common greeting among the Greeks, and peace (Hebrew, “shalom”) was a common greeting among Jews. Paul combined them together, elevating their meaning. Read Romans 5:1-2. What is the connection between these two words?

7. Although no church is perfect, there are definite marks of maturity Paul emphasized when commending a church. What characteristics of this church does Paul commend in v. 3?

Scriptural Insight: Three characteristics of these Christians stood out to Paul: First, they had turned to Christ in "faith." Second, they had served Him out of "love." Third, they had borne up under tribulation patiently, because of the "hope" that lay before them. [Each of these] found its object in Jesus Christ as they lived before God. They had exercised faith in the past when they first trusted Christ. They were loving Him in the present, and they were hoping for His return in the future. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 2 Corinthians 2020 Edition*, pp. 13-14)

8. In vv. 4-5, what assurances did Paul give to the Thessalonians about their faith (vv. 4-5)?

9. In vv. 6-8, we see evidence of their faith, love, and hope in Christ.

- Whom have the Thessalonians chosen to imitate (v. 6) and how?
- By doing so, what have they become to others (v. 7)?
- What was the result (v. 8, first part)?

From the Greek: The word *exechetai*, translated “rang out” (NIV), could be rendered “reverberated” like an echo that keeps on going. Paul saw the Thessalonians as amplifiers or relay stations that not only received the gospel message but sent it farther on its way with increased power and scope...The Thessalonians had acted as relay runners by passing the gospel they had heard on to farther places. They may have been a missionary church. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 692; *Dr. Constable’s Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 16)

10. What principles should be guiding us in imitating others?

- 1 Corinthians 11:1—
- Ephesians 5:1-2—
- 1 Timothy 4:12—

Think About It: In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” That’s the kind of statement that gets the apostle Paul slapped with labels like “arrogant” and “egotistical.” Maybe that bothers you, too. Why didn’t Paul just take himself out of the equation and tell people to follow Christ? The answer is that Paul knew we all need a role model, a picture of Christ that makes the heart, mind and ways of Christ visible and tangible. To step into a role of leadership is essentially to state, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” If people are going to follow us, our primary task is to lead ourselves well ... The first step toward leading yourself well is following well ... And if you are a Christ follower, the practice of following [Him] well is fundamental to your identity and may be one of the greatest tests of your character. (Heather Zempel, *Community Is Messy*, pages 67-68)

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

11. In the gospels, we see that Jesus would connect with people and impart truth to them. And He has used His servants to reach you and model for you how to follow Him.

- Who are the earthly examples who have demonstrated to you how to follow Christ well?
- In whom are you consciously investing right now so that they would learn how to follow Christ by imitating you? What results have you seen in their lives?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 9-10.

Historical Insight: The fact that God is a living Person was precious to the Jews and to Paul; this is the characteristic by which God is most often distinguished from so-called gods in the Old Testament. He is the only living God; all other gods are not alive and therefore not worthy objects of worship. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 692)

12. Verse 9 gives us the perfect definition of repentance—to change one's mind and, therefore, one's direction in life. The Thessalonians are telling their own story of repentance. What change did they make?

Focus on the Meaning: The repentance followed the turning to God. It didn't precede it. When they turned to God, they automatically turned from idols. Take your hand and hold it so the palm of your hand is facing toward you. Now turn your hand around. When you turned your hand around, the back side of your hand now faces you, and the palm of your hand automatically turned away from you. Just so, you cannot turn to Christ Jesus without turning from something, my friend. That turning from something is repentance. It was not reformation first and faith in Christ second, but it was faith in Christ first with the result that idols were forsaken. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 18)

13. The Thessalonians were mostly pagan Gentiles who may have only heard about the Jewish God before Paul came to town. And their lives had been steeped in the functions of idol worship. Considering their likely previous habits and pursuits, how could their change of mind and direction (v. 9) have impacted their daily lives? Look elsewhere in vv. 3-8 for evidence of the changes.

14. Another aspect of our faith is waiting for Jesus' return (v. 10). Write what Paul tells them in the space below.

Historical Insight: ... the formerly pagan Thessalonians probably understood the [appearing] of Christ in terms of the visits of the imperial rulers of Rome. These rulers were increasingly being thought of as the manifestations of deities who required elaborate ceremonies and honors when they visited the various cities of the Empire. (Dr. Constable's *Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, pp. 34-35)

15. What evidence do we have that Jesus is indeed returning? See Mark 13:26-27; Luke 21:27-28; and Acts 1:11.

Scriptural Insight: Paul speaks often in these two letters about Jesus' coming. We'll see more in 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; and 2:1.

16. When Jesus appears, He will rescue us from what?

What is God's wrath?

When you read or hear about God's wrath, do you picture God raging with out-of-control anger? Since that is our experience with human anger, we might think that His is the same, only bigger. But the Bible teaches that God's wrath is not a mood or a fit of temper. God's disposition toward sin and evil is as constant and unrelenting as His love and goodness. He hates and rejects evil in a perfect and holy anger. He will never bend or compromise with it. His own nature demands that He judge it through action.

Why does God do this? He loves His creation. He desires it to reflect His holiness. To preserve His creation, God must destroy whatever would destroy it. Every wrathful judgment of God is and will be a holy act of preservation.

Let's put this in everyday terms that you and I can understand. How much do you hate germs like the flu virus infiltrating your home? Do you use a disinfectant to clean with gusto and keep your family from getting sick? My disposition toward the flu virus (or worse) is wrath. It is pollution of my home. I do whatever is necessary to get rid of it. Don't you?

Consider ants in your house. You probably do not invite ants into your house and just ignore their presence while they take over your kitchen or bedroom. Don't you do whatever you can to attack their presence and restore your home to a safe environment for yourself and your family? When I spray ant killer where I've seen ants crawling in my kitchen, I am expressing wrath against their destruction of my safe home environment. God's wrath is far more serious, of course. Sin is much more awful with far more destructive consequences than the flu virus or ants. But you get the idea.

Our culture tends to dismiss the seriousness of human sinfulness. We blame people and circumstances for our behavior and attitudes rather than blaming our deceitful, desperately wicked hearts. God hates sin. It incurs His anger. But God loves people. God's holy wrath against all sin is fully satisfied by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. The term used to describe that in the Bible is *propitiation* (pronounced like initiation). Because of what Jesus did on the cross, God extends mercy to everyone who believes in Christ. That means God is satisfied...no longer angry at your sin, and His wrath against sin is no longer directed at you. This is truth for you to know and claim.

17. Read John 3:36; Romans 5:9; and 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. According to these verses,

- Who will experience God's wrath and why?
- Who will not experience God's wrath and why?
- What is the one sin that keeps anyone from experiencing the wonderful salvation of God?

Belief, not behavior, is the basis for determining who receives eternal life and salvation from God's wrath. As a believer in Christ, you are saved from God's wrath and eternally lavished in His love instead.

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

18. We said that repentance means to change one's mind and, therefore, one's direction in life.

- When you first believed, what changes took place in your mind?
- How has your life altered (change of direction) since you encountered the living and true God? Consider using a creative means (poem, song, drawing, prayer) to illustrate what has happened to your life since encountering the living and true God.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned in this lesson.

3: Perspective on Being a Servant-Leader

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say?

Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. 3 For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. 4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. 5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness--God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. 8 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. 9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; 11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, 12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.

4. What topics (if any) in this passage have we studied in previous lessons?

5. **Gain perspective:** From this lesson's passage (2:1-12), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 1-6.

6. Paul followed Christ in both teaching and example of what it means to be a servant-leader. His words in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 are evidence of that. Read Mark 10:42-45. How did Jesus distinguish the difference between worldly leaders and what He wants for His followers to do?

7. A servant-leader knows who is really the one in authority. Paul repeatedly stressed that the message he preached had greater authority than being from Paul.

- To whom does the gospel message belong (vv. 2, 8, 9)?

- What is the gospel message with which they were entrusted (v. 4)? Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 and John 3:16.

8. Paul referenced a specific event in 1 Thessalonians 2:2. Read Acts 16:16-40. What happened that could have discouraged Paul and Silas from continuing their mission but didn't stop them?

The common reaction to unpopular messages, then and now, is this: "If you can't refute the message, attack the messenger." That seems to have been the situation in Thessalonica. Someone was spreading rumors to slander the character of Paul and his companions and their motives for coming to Thessalonica. Paul's defense was to remind them of the truth of his conduct while in their midst.

9. What did Paul and his team **not** do when proclaiming the gospel (vv. 3-6)? See also 2 Corinthians 4:2.

Focus on the Meaning: "To trick" referred to the use of a lure for catching fish. The phrase was commonly used in Paul's day for any cunning intended to gain a profit. (*NIV Study Bible*, p. 1821)

10. In contrast, what did Paul and his team do whenever they proclaimed the gospel (vv. 4-6)? See also 1 Corinthians 2:4-5.

From the Greek: The phrase in 1 Thessalonians 2:4, "approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel," literally means "found to have stood the test."

11. Paul lived and worked to please whom (v. 4)? Why? See also 2 Corinthians 5:9.

Scriptural Insight: Paul claimed that his message was true, his motives were pure, and his methods were straightforward. He and his companions had behaved in Thessalonica as they had elsewhere, as faithful servants of God. They did not preach for the approval of "men," but of "God," who scrutinizes motives. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 24)

The Christian sports ministry, Athletes in Action, teaches college and professional athletes to play for an "Audience of One." The intent of the phrase is to help Christian players remember that everywhere in life—even in a stadium full of people—we are to live to please God, not men. The same is true of every Christian in any part of life. We live for an Audience of One—to the glory of God, not of ourselves. A Christian servant-leader always keeps in mind the "Audience of One."

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

12. Have you been slandered by someone in order to keep people from listening to or respecting you? How did you respond? How should you respond and why? See also 1 Peter 2:15.

13. Just as Paul, we are called to be faithful to God and to please Him and not men. If you choose to do everything in life for an "Audience of One,"

- What changes do you need to make in your thinking and behavior?

- What gets in your way of doing this? Where is your greatest struggle to please God more than pleasing people?

- How can we help one another to faithfully live for an "Audience of One?"

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 7-12.

14. Once again, let's look at Jesus' teaching about being a servant-leader. Read John 13:13-17. What do you learn from his example and words?

15. Serving others usually requires sacrifice of time, energy, and possessions. This is certainly true of women and men who serve as mothers and fathers to children. Paul, Timothy, and Silas took on the roles of both mother and father to their spiritual children in Thessalonica.

- How did they serve as a “mother” to them?
- How did they serve as a “father” to them?
- What did they **not** do to their audience (vv. 6, 9)?

Historical Insight: In the Greco-Roman period in which he lived, philosophers like Paul were highly valued and in high job demand. A philosopher of his day could earn income in one of 3 acceptable ways. They could charge fees for their teaching (Acts 19:9; 2 Corinthians 11). They could serve rich families as a kind of ‘house philosopher’ to educate the head of household & his children. Or they could work at a tradecraft while carrying on philosophical discussions with co-workers and members of the general public who visited the workshop. That would be the equivalent social setting of a coffee shop today. This last option was Paul's method of financially supporting himself as needed. From an early age, Paul received skill training in what is believed to be his family's business of tent-making (also, leather-working). It's easy to imagine Paul yakking away, teaching others while keeping busy with his hands. Ministry was never meant to be separated from work. (Ron Newton, *Lessons from Crunch Time Business in the Bible*)

16. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):**

- There are a number of biblical examples of nursing mothers and the value of nursing relationships in the sight of God. Read Numbers 11:12; 1 Samuel 1:21-24; Psalm 8:2 and Matthew 21:16; Psalm 131:2; Isaiah 40:11; 49:14-15; and 66:7-13. What do you learn?

- The Bible also used a baby's need for milk as a spiritual teaching tool. Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Hebrews 5:12-14; and 1 Peter 2:1-3. What do you learn?

17. One of the accusations Paul faced in several of his churches centered around how he differed from the usual professional speakers who traveled from town to town, entertained the crowds, and expected the listeners to pay for their "wisdom." Itinerant philosophers and orators were common in the Roman Empire. [Note: Greek culture considered manual labor such as Paul's tent-making to be "lower class."]

- Was it wrong for Paul to preach the gospel free of charge?

- What reason did Paul give for choosing to humbly serve the Thessalonians like that?

- What ultimately is Paul's goal (v. 12)?

- How were his actions an application of Jesus' words in Mark 10:42-45 and John 13:13-16?

Scriptural Insight: Paul's principle was to preach and teach without charging those who benefited directly from his ministry. This is a good policy in church planting, but it is not normative for a settled pastoral ministry (1 Corinthians 9:14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 2 Corinthians 2020 Edition*, p. 152)

18. The kingdom referenced in v. 12 would be the millennial kingdom Jesus would set up at His Second Coming to earth (Revelation 20). [Note: the “Extra Lesson” at the end of this study guide covers this in more detail.] Why or how would looking ahead to the bliss of being in that kingdom be an incentive for godly living now?

19. Paul had come to Thessalonica to give, not to get. He gave himself and his message to the Thessalonians out of love for them, not for personal gain. Four times, he wrote “you know” (1:5; 2:2, 5, 6) reminding them of what they had witnessed with their own eyes. From vv. 1-12, we have a beautiful, clear presentation of the heart attitude of a “servant-leader” representing Christ. Summarize what you learn from these verses.

Think About It: Such behavior displayed toward people should shut the mouths of any critics.

20. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Read John 10:1-13. It is common in the Bible for kings and priests and other leaders to be considered “shepherds” of the people who are “their sheep.” Discuss the distinction between true shepherds who are servant-leaders and those who are not serving their sheep.

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

21. All of us have spheres of authority. As a servant-leader belonging to and representing Christ, we are to use our authority for building up those in our sphere of influence.

- Some of us don’t handle that authority well. What is your heart attitude towards those you serve? Do you struggle with being bossy and bearing down on others within your sphere of influence? Where do you need to improve?

- Our God is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17) and can produce such a servant-leader's heart in you if you seek it. Ask the Lord to teach you graciousness, gentleness, and give you a servant's heart for those in your sphere of influence (home, work, neighborhood, church). You can say, "Lord Jesus, I can't do this on my own. But you can do this in me and through me. I will trust you to show me how." Then, watch what He does!

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

4: Perspective on Suffering

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say?

Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. 14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, 16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. 17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. 18 Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

1. What grabbed your attention from vv. 13-20?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.

4. What topics (if any) in this passage have we studied in previous lessons?

5. ***Gain perspective:*** From this lesson's passage (2:13-20), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 13-16.

6. Why did Paul thank God (v. 13)?

7. What were the Thessalonians experiencing?

8. True leadership requires the ability to define a situation, attitude, or goal. Followers ask their leader, "What is the best way to think about this situation?"

- How did Paul answer this question for them (vv. 14-15)?
- Of what had he reminded them about their suffering in 1:6-7?
- How would Paul's words be an encouragement to the Thessalonians?

9. The Thessalonians are connected to other churches as part of the Body of Christ and by their suffering. What emotions and reactions often occur when a person is under persecution?

10. Remember that suffering is usually imposed on you by someone or something else and not something you choose to willingly give up. Read the following verses and list the possible “benefits” of persecution or suffering (if any).

- Matthew 5:10-12—
- 2 Corinthians 1:6-10—
- 1 Peter 4:12-16, 19—
- James 1:2-4—

11. What specific accusations did Paul make against the opposition in 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16?

Think About It: An unbeliever who is willing to live and let live with respect to personal convictions regarding God is less dangerous than one who not only disbelieves himself but also tries to keep others from hearing the gospel. The unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica were of the latter variety. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 696)

Paul spoke not just as a recipient of persecution but also as a once active participant. In his personal testimony, he told of how he persecuted Christians to their imprisonment and death (Acts 22:4). In 1 Timothy 1:13, he wrote these words, “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.”

12. Read Romans 9:1-5 and 10:1. Did Paul’s condemnation of those Jews come from personal hatred towards them? Explain your answer. What was his (and God’s) desire for all people?

Scriptural Insight: Paul desperately wanted unbelieving Jews to come to faith in Christ (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1). Yet they were some of his most antagonistic persecutors (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24, 26). Their actions were "not pleasing to God" (an understatement), and were not in the best interests of all men who needed to hear the gospel ... By their opposition, these enemies of the gospel added more transgressions on their own heads ("always fill up the measure of their sins"), with the result that they hastened God's judgment ("wrath") of them (cf. Gen. 15:16). They not only rejected the gospel themselves, but they also discouraged others from accepting it. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 29)

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

13. Review what you learned in Question 10 about the benefits of suffering.

- *Regarding persecution:* In what ways do you experience suffering related to being a Christian? What benefits have you seen God bring from such suffering that gives you encouragement?

- *Regarding general suffering:* In what ways do you experience suffering other than persecution for your faith? What benefits have you seen God bring from such suffering that gives you encouragement?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 17-20.

14. Paul refers to being "torn away" or "orphaned" from them. The meaning of the original Greek word used here is "to be bereaved of a parent or parents." It was sudden, not of his own choosing. In what terms had Paul already expressed a "family" relationship to them?

15. Read Acts 17:5-15 to see how he was torn away from the Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 2:18, Paul blames Satan for blocking him from revisiting the Thessalonians. From Acts 17:6-9, what was one possible way Satan hindered Paul from returning? (Think legal!)

Scriptural Insight: The word translated “blocked” or “hindered” means to make a road impassable like a flood sweeping out a bridge or the roadbed. It also means to place an obstacle sharply in the path to detain a person unnecessarily. Paul’s reason for deciding to return was to provide additional spiritual help for the new converts. This in itself is clearly the will of God in any situation. Seen as such, any hindrance becomes opposition to the will of God. Regardless of who was involved on the human level, the ultimate leader of this kind of opposition is Satan. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 697)

16. Even if he couldn’t legally return to see them yet, what could he still do? See 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 3:2.

17. Jesus knew the reality of Satan at work in the world to hinder people from believing in God. Discuss Jesus’ comments in John 8:37-44 in light of what Paul experienced in Thessalonica.

18. Of what importance were the Thessalonians to Paul (vv. 19-20)? See also 2:8, 11.

From the Greek: In this context, the crown (Gr. *stephanos*) to which Paul was referring was not a royal crown but a wreath used on festive occasions. It also denoted a token of public honor for distinguished service.

19. Of what was Paul confident about Jesus (v. 19)?

20. In what would Paul glory in the presence of Jesus? Why is this important for us to know and remember?

Scriptural Insight: They were everything that was worth anything to Paul. They were his hope as he watched them grow into maturity. They were his joy as he thought about what they used to be and what they had become and would be by the grace of God. They were his crown as a symbol of God's blessing on his life and work. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 697)

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

21. Have you been torn away from someone you love? What steps are you able to take to sustain and nurture the relationship? How are you trusting God until you can be with them again?

22. Consider what or whom will be your glory at the end of your earthly life. Is it being great at your work or the people you have influenced? If you tend to value your work (career, accomplishments, status) more than people, ask the Lord to change your heart and your priorities so that the influence on people in your life will become more important to you than your work. That is His will so He will answer that prayer.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

5: Perspective on Faithful Endurance

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say?

Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

1 Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, 2 and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, 3 that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. 4 For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. 5 For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you-- 7 therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. 8 For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, 10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? 11 Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. 12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, 13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

1. What grabbed your attention from 3:1-13?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.

4. What topics (if any) in this passage have we studied in previous lessons?

5. **Gain perspective:** From this lesson's passage (3:1-13), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say?

Today, we will focus on vv. 1-8.

6. Answer the following questions to better follow the narrative given.

- What decision did Paul make (v. 1)?

- Whom did he send and why (vv. 2-3)?

- What did Paul know would happen (v. 4)?

- What problem did Paul recognize (v. 5)?

- What news did Timothy bring back from Thessalonica (v. 6)? How did this news affect Paul (vv. 7-8)?

7. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Timothy was likely 18 or so when he joined Paul's second missionary journey. Read Acts 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:2-5; 3:14-15; and Philippians 2:19-22. What do you learn about Timothy?

What does it mean?

8. Paul refers to "trials" in v. 3. The Greek word translated as "trials" means "pressing together, pressure" and refers to any trouble that causes anguish and distress, whether from the burdens of life or persecution. Trials in this context, though, refers to persecution from hostile fellow citizens (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14). The word *destined* means "certain to meet, according to a plan." Read the following verses to explain what Paul meant when he said that believers are *destined* for that kind of trial.

- John 15:18-21—
- Philippians 1:29-30—
- 2 Timothy 3:12—

9. Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-9; 4:16-17. How should a Christ-follower think when it comes to such trials?

Dependent Living: Beware of a false teaching that says, "God doesn't give you more than you can handle." Of course, He does! Paul testified to that in 2 Corinthians 1:8. After all those years of serving God, if God wanted Paul to rely on Him rather than on his own figuring out, you can be confident that God wants the same for you. God gives all of us more than we can handle on our own in order to drive us to Him so that we will depend on Him more than on ourselves.

10. The last lesson focused on the benefits of suffering. This lesson will focus on our response to suffering. Read Matthew 5:43-48 and Romans 12:14, 17-21. How should a Christ-follower respond to harsh treatment from others?

11. Regardless of the kind of trial causing anguish, how should one Christ-follower encourage another who is undergoing such distress? Consider all that you've learned so far.

12. Because of the persecution, Paul's concern (v. 5) is the Thessalonian believers might have been tempted to do what? Consider their background.

Dependent Living: Often new believers, and even older believers, interpret difficulty as a sign that God is mad at them or that they have done something wrong. That is the pagan view of trouble not the biblical view of trouble. God allows troubles in our lives to teach us faithful endurance as we rely on Him.

13. Temptation is not sin, but during trials, believers might be tempted to sin through giving up, taking revenge, or compromise. What does the Lord promise to us regarding temptation?

- 1 Corinthians 10:12-13—
- Hebrews 4:14-16—

Scriptural Insight: The tempter (1 Thessalonians 3:5) is Satan (Matthew 4:1-3). Although God allows him freedom to tempt believers, remember that he has already been defeated on the cross (Colossians 2:15), and Christians need not be overwhelmed by him as they learn to rely on God more and more in their lives.

14. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Go to gotquestions.org and type in the question, "Who is Satan?" Read the information and scriptures given in the answer. What do you learn?

15. Paul had a healthy fear (concern) for the Thessalonians (v. 5). Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it. Paul sent Timothy back to them (v. 2). What news did Timothy bring back to Paul (vv. 6-8)?

Think About It: One of the meanings of the Greek word translated “really live” in v. 8 is “to breathe.” As a result of that action, Paul basically said he could “breathe again.” We often use that phrase today, “able to breathe again,” when we no longer need to be afraid or worried about someone or something. Consider how parents feel when they send their kids off to college then hear that they are thriving there rather than sinking. Or consider how you feel when someone you love travels far away and you finally hear from them that they are safe. That’s what Paul was experiencing.

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

16. *About trials:* As a member of the Body of Christ, you should hurt when another part of the Body is hurting (1 Corinthians 12:25-27). You may not be undergoing persecution or suffering at the moment, but you likely know someone who is. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, 11 and Ephesians 6:18. What can you do to share in the pain of persecution or other suffering and give comfort where needed? Consider also what Paul did in this lesson.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 9-13.

17. After Paul received the good news about the Thessalonians (vv. 6-8) ...

- What was his response to God (v. 9)?

- Based on what you've learned so far in 1 Thessalonians, why did he feel that way?

18. For what was he frequently praying for the Thessalonians (v. 10)?

19. Paul used the word "faith" 5 times in this chapter. Faith needs to be fed with truth so believers will know how to live. Considering how new to the faith those Thessalonian Christians were, what could Paul have meant by the phrase, "supply what is lacking in your faith" (v. 10)? See also 1 Thessalonians 2:12 and 4:1.

Think About It: If he couldn't come in person, he could send Timothy to teach, and he could write. Chapters 4 and 5 in this letter teach truths to help them live to please God.

20. It is evident from Paul's writings that a very large part of his private life was occupied in prayer and thanksgiving. And prayer was his default response to whatever life threw at him. In 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 and 3:10-11, Paul expressed his longing (literally "passionate, intense longing") to be with the new church again.

- What did Paul ask God to do (v. 11)?
- How do we know Paul was willing to wait for the Lord's timing?

21. In vv. 12-13, Paul prayed a beautiful, heartfelt prayer for the new church at Thessalonica. Considering their current life experiences, why would their love need to "increase and overflow" for not only fellow church members but others as well?

Think About It: This kind of love was described by the late author, Francis Schaeffer, as "the mark of the Christian." God is the source of this kind of love.

22. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** We humans need to learn how to live a life of love (Ephesians 5:1-2) God's way. What would that look like in our thoughts and behavior toward others? Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and Colossians 3:5-17 to answer that question.

23. Paul also prayed that God would strengthen their hearts so they would be blameless and holy (v. 13). Read the "Scriptural Insight" then answer the question below it.

Scriptural Insight: To be holy means to be set apart from sin and to God. The Bible uses the term "sanctified" to describe this in 1 Thessalonians 4:3. By faith in Jesus Christ, God declares us holy in His sight. We are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27). When God looks on you and me, He sees Jesus and His righteousness, not all of our faults. His love chooses to do that for us. You have been set apart as God's special, beloved possession for His exclusive use. You are also "being made holy" in your thoughts, words, and actions by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is ongoing from the moment of salvation until the Lord comes or you die, when your "being made holy" is complete.

We make choices that reflect our desire to set ourselves apart from sin and to God's purposes for us. Read 2 Corinthians 7:1 and Titus 2:11-12. What do you learn about choices you can make to strengthen your heart so you will be blameless and holy?

24. We are to live now with the perspective of what will happen in our future. Jesus is coming with whom (v. 13)? See also 1 Thessalonians 4:14, 16.

25. Read Hebrews 12:1-3. The holy ones coming with Jesus are the witnesses. They are believers in God who lived before us and stayed faithful in spite of trials. Based on Hebrews 12:1, what are we encouraged to do now during the waiting?

Jesus is our example of how to live through suffering. He is also the one who enables us to stay faithful to Him through suffering (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

26. *About loving others during suffering:* What has God taught you about growing in your love for others, even during trials? What do you still need to learn? Ask Him for that today using the prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:12.

27. *About pursuing holiness:* What has God taught you about separating yourself from sin and wickedness, even during trials? What do you still need to learn? Ask Him for that today using the prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:13.

28. *About waiting for God with patient endurance:*

- When you desperately want something that seems out of your reach, what is your typical reaction? Do you ever allow God to “clear the way” for you in His own perfect timing?
- Read Psalm 40:1-3. Consider anything you have patiently endured. What did you learn through that? With whom have you shared your “new song” of God’s faithfulness in your life?

Pray 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 for yourself and others.

6: Perspective on Sex and Love

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say?

Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

1 Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; 2 for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. 7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. 8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit. 9 But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; 11 that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

1. What grabbed your attention from 4:1-12?
2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?
3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.
4. What topics (if any) in this passage have we studied in previous lessons?

5. **Gain perspective:** From this lesson's passage (4:1-12), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 1-8.

What does it mean?

6. According to v. 1, what should determine the life choices of every believer? See also 1 Thessalonians 2:4; Colossians 1:10; and John 8:29. Remember our "Audience of One" (Lesson 3).

Think About It: The Christian life is not a set of rules to be obeyed or a list of prohibitions to avoid; it is the outworking of a loving desire to **please God** who chose us. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 700)

Such a decision influences every part of life, especially those areas where the culture teaches otherwise, such as sexual behavior. The Mosaic Law was very clear on God's design of sex for marriage between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24-25) and His expectation of His people to avoid sexual immorality (Leviticus chapter 18). The Jews were not immune to sexual immorality, and Jesus hit them hard on the subject (see Matthew 5:27-28; John 8:2-11). But the Gentile culture was far worse. That is why sexual immorality was included in the "4 things to avoid" letter sent to Gentile Christians in Acts 15:19-20.

Historical Insight: The Greeks practiced sexual immorality commonly, and even incorporated it into their religious practices. Pagan religion did not demand sexual purity of its devotees, the gods and goddesses being grossly immoral. Priestesses were in the temples for the service of the men who came. Greek men were known to keep prostitutes and mistresses. So long as a man supported his wife and family, there was no shame whatsoever in extra-marital relationships. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 44)

7. As believers, we sometimes fret because we can't figure out God's will on some matter in our lives. Yet, He has given us specific direction about a great many things. What is declared with certainty to be God's will for all believers in v. 3? See also v. 7.

Remember that being sanctified (holiness) means to be **set apart** from sin and to God's purposes in your life. Because of our faith in Christ, God declares us to be holy in status. The indwelling Holy Spirit goes to work in us to make us holy in our thoughts and behavior so that we are like Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29). We make choices that reflect our desire to set ourselves apart from sin and to God's purposes for us. Being sanctified also involves abstinence (self-denial) of behavior that is outside the prescribed will of God.

8. Paul wrote to believers who had already been declared holy by their position in Christ. His teaching is now referring to their present conduct.

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 and Ephesians 5:1-4. Why should believers be "set apart for the Lord" regarding sex?
- Would you agree that holiness and sexual immorality are mutually exclusive? Why or why not? See Romans 8:5-8.

9. Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5. The Greek word translated "control" or "possess" in verse 4 carried the idea of gaining mastery over something. And Paul commonly used the word for "vessel" in his writings to describe one's own body (as "jars of clay" in 2 Corinthians 4:7).

- What does it mean to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable? Holy and honorable to whom?
- Contrast that with the description in verse 5.

Focus on the Meaning: God's plan for a Christian includes purifying her life. Sexual immorality frustrates the purpose of God's call.... **A holy life demonstrates God's supernatural power at work overcoming what is natural**, and it glorifies God. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 702)

10. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Read Genesis 2:24-25; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; and Hebrews 13:4. Concerning God's design of sex, does God say what He wants? Add other verses that support this.

Scriptural Insight: Physical love in marriage, symbolically uniting two personalities by the outward act of sexual intercourse, is beautiful in the eyes of God. And it is holy...The *Song of Solomon* is a very romantic book in which God communicates to us His delight in the wonderful relationship between a man and woman in marriage...God made us sexual beings. Marriage has been provided to satisfy such needs, and every scriptural prohibition has to do with sexual activity outside marriage. Don't let anyone tell you the Bible prohibits sex or represses your sexuality. (Vickie Kraft, *Influential Woman*, pp. 64-70)

11. In verse 6, Paul used two words to describe actions that hurt others. The words translated "wrong" and "take advantage" both mean to take more than you should, to overreach, to step over the limits to gain an advantage over.

- What do you think Paul means by saying not to wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister in the area of sexual behavior? Consider examples of this in life.
- Why should you take this admonition seriously? What does God promise to do about it whenever you wrong or take advantage of another person in the area of sexual behavior?

Focus on the Meaning: Sexual immorality wrongs the partner by involving him or her in behavior contrary to God's will and therefore under His judgment...The initiation of the act takes advantage of the other person by fanning the fire of passion until self-control is lost. This is not referring to rape, incest, or sexual molestation. Those are acts of violence perpetrated on an innocent person. God acting as Avenger would certainly apply in those situations as well. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, pp. 701-702)

12. As you have seen from today's passage, God takes a position on sex.

- When you reject biblical teaching about sexual behavior, what are you really doing (v. 8)? Why is this not a wise thing to do?

- Based on this study of 1 Thessalonians, what can you say to someone, especially a Christian, who says they don't accept biblical standards because they don't apply today?

In the first century, moral standards were generally low, and chastity was regarded as an unreasonable restriction. Sound familiar? According to recent surveys, the morality of Christians is not much different from that of non-Christians in the area of sex. For many of us, holding to God's standard of sexual morality may mean that we honor His word more than our own opinions. How easy is that for you?

Scriptural Insight: The indwelling Holy Spirit has power enough to enable any Christian to learn how to control his own body, even in a pagan immoral climate. The exhortation is to avoid sexual immorality; the enablement comes from the Holy Spirit. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, pp. 702)

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

13. *If someone has wronged you or taken advantage of you in the past:* Read Ephesians 4:30-32 and Romans 12:17-19. As a forgiven believer in Jesus Christ, what should you do? Consider also what you learned in today's lesson.

14. *If you are presently caught in sexual immorality:* All sin (past, present, and future) is forgiven the moment anyone trusts in Christ. Yet, the sin nature remains in our bodies as long as we live on this earth. Because we are not perfected, we will continue to sin both unintentionally and intentionally. Our sins are forgiven, but our God knows that continuing sinful behavior is not good for us and does not please Him. If you are in a sexually immoral relationship or behavior pattern, and want to please God with your life, follow this biblical process to deal with that recognized sin:

Step One: View yourself rightly. Your identity is not that immoral sin. You are in Christ, a child of God, who sometimes sins against God in that way.

Step Two: Recognize (confess) the truth regarding your sin. To confess biblically means to agree with God about what you and He both know to be true. Confession is not a formula, a process, or dependent on a mediator. Regarding sin in your life, it is not saying, "I'm sorry." It is saying, "I agree with you, God. I blew it!" You see your sin as something awful! Considering sexual immorality, the Spirit has convicted you from this lesson that sexual immorality in any form is not pleasing to God. You are instructed to flee or avoid immorality. You recognize this sin in your life. You agree with God that your immoral sexual behavior is seeking love and acceptance from the wrong source. It doesn't fit someone who knows God. That is confession.

Step Three: Confession is incomplete without repentance. Repentance means to change your mind about that sin, to turn away from it, to mourn its ugliness, resulting in changing your actions. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:9-11 that godly sorrow brings repentance. It's saying, "I recognize what I am doing is wrong. This fills me with sorrow because it hurts You, God. Please help me to live differently." And that is how our lives get transformed. If you want to live in order to please God, then you know that God wants you to avoid sexual immorality. So you can pray, "Lord Jesus, please have your Spirit nudge me when I am not holy and honorable with my body. Help me to say no to temptation and to give up any relationship and behavior that is not honorable to you. By faith, Lord, I want you to do that in my life." That is repentance. Repentance isn't repentance until you change something. You can confess "until the cows come home" (daily, habitually) and never change anything. Jesus called for people to "repent" not "confess."

Step Four: Repentance leads to dependence. Depend on the living Christ inside you for that change to take place, whatever it is. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not interested in our compliance or outward conformity as much as He desires our obedience from the heart. Memorize 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 and any other scriptures that deal with staying pure and not rejecting God's instructions. Be sensitive to the Spirit's nudging when you are tempted to do otherwise. And choose to desire a life that pleases God. It's right to say, "Lord Jesus, I can't do this on my own. I trust you to do this in me and through me." Then, watch what He does!

15. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Masturbation is a hot topic in our modern culture with many views, even among Christians. Since the Bible doesn't mention this self-stimulation specifically, you must use what the Bible does say about sex and its purpose to derive a biblical perspective on this subject. God designed sex for marriage. Masturbation within the marriage relationship where the husband and wife are thinking about each other would still fit within God's purpose. When that is accompanied by fantasy, pornography, or adulterous thoughts, one crosses the line into immorality. For a single person, any kind of sexual activity outside of

marriage is against God's purpose for sex. Here are two resources that give thoughtful insight for you: "[Does the Bible say that masturbation is sin?](#)" on Bible.org. and "[Questions and Concerns about Masturbation](#)" on focusonthefamily.com.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 9-12.

From the Greek: The phrase translated "love for each other (NIV)" or "brotherly love (ESV/NKJV)" translates *philadelphia*, a Greek word that outside the New Testament almost without exception denoted the mutual love of children of the same father. In the New Testament, it always means love of fellow believers in Christ, all of whom have the same heavenly Father. (*The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1824)

16. In verses 9-10, Paul referred again to the love the Thessalonians had for each other (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 3:12). He said that they had been taught by God to love each other.

- Read John 13:1, 15, 34-35. How does Jesus teach us about love?
- Read 1 John 4:7-12. How does God teach us about love?

17. How does following God's instructions about sex in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 fit with loving one another more and more (vv. 9-10)?

18. After urging them to love one another more and more,

- What three things should they also do (v. 11)?
- Why (v. 12)?

Let's examine verse 11 more closely, phrase by phrase, and see how these three aspects of behavior demonstrate love for others.

19. *Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life:*

- The word translated "quiet" means quiet in the sense of restfulness and peacefulness. It refers to being undisturbed and settled, not frantic and restless. It is not saying you must lead a life of silence with no talking or exuberance. What could "to lead a quiet life" mean? See also 1 Timothy 2:1-4 and consider what the Thessalonians were experiencing.
- "Make it your ambition" means to strive earnestly, make it your aim or goal. Why would aiming to lead "a quiet life" be a good thing for yourself as well as for others?

20. *Mind your own business:*

- "To mind your own business" means "to do or manage that which pertains to you." Contrast what it means to mind or attend to your own business with the opposite of doing that. See also 2 Thessalonians 3:11.
- How would minding your own business demonstrate brotherly love for other believers?

21. *Work with your hands:*

Historical Insight: The Greeks deplored manual labor and relegated it to slaves as much as possible. But the Jews held it in esteem; every Jewish boy was taught a trade regardless of his family's wealth. Work itself is a blessing, and working with one's hands should never be despised by Christians." (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 703)

The phrase "work with your hands" doesn't mean just using your hands as in manual labor. It refers to any work that you do by your own efforts to support yourself.

- Read 1 Thessalonians 2:6-9 and 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10. How had Paul set the example for them and why?
- How would doing this demonstrate love for and benefit other believers? See also Ephesians 4:28.

Dependent Living: Notice that Paul's intent was not to change the society. He encouraged Christians to rely on God to change their hearts and behavior to be like Christ. In that way, they would become the best citizens they could be and benefit their society in more ways than they could ever do on their own.

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

22. *About leading a "quiet life":* If your life is hectic, what actions should you take to make it less hectic and disruptive to those around you? Do you influence your family members, neighbors, or co-workers away from living a "quiet life?" Talk to God about this and ask Him to work in your heart first. Then, ask Him to direct you towards leading a quiet life.

23. *About minding your own business:* Are you tempted to meddle in other people's lives? If so, do you recognize this as a distraction from your own walk with God as well as theirs? Ask Jesus to help you not try to "fix" people or situations but to direct them to the Lord first.

24. *About working:* How do you view your work? Is it only a means to a paycheck? Or do you consider your work as a way to live out your faith in the view of your co-workers? Read Colossians 3:23-24. What do you learn about this?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

7: Perspective on Death and Beyond

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Trying to understand prophecy about the future is like having a bunch of puzzle pieces that look similar but without the picture on the box top to tell you how to arrange them. All we know for sure are the border pieces. We can put the 4 sides of the puzzle together. Those are events we know will definitely happen, but we don't know when or how the rest of the pieces fit inside the border.

Paul described one such event in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. This is Christ appearing as Savior to gather all believers, dead and alive, together with Him in the clouds. A second event is the Great Tribulation during which God's wrath against sin is directed toward earth. That is introduced in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. Another event is the revealing of the Antichrist, described as the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. The fourth event is Christ coming in judgment on unbelievers and setting up His kingdom on earth. That's described in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. Those are the 4 sides to our puzzle.

What does the Bible say?

Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.

4. What topics (if any) in this passage have we studied in previous lessons?

5. **Gain perspective:** From this lesson's passage (vv. 13-18), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on what is said in verses 13-17 and try to carefully cover what it all means. Because of that, today's study will be longer than usual. Day Three Study will expand our understanding of our future life beyond death.

Focus on the Meaning: The precious truth concerning the coming of Christ for His own is as certain as the central doctrine of the death and resurrection of Christ. This coming (Gr. *parousia*, lit. "appearing") of Christ is the same as His *appearing in the clouds* (Acts 1:11). It is not His Second Coming...at which time He will remain on the earth, set up His earthly kingdom, and reign for 1,000 years (Rev. 19:11-21). The differences in the descriptions of these comings present them as separate events. (*Dr. Constables Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, pp. 50-51)

What does the Bible say?

6. Answer these questions based on what is written in the text.

- What did Paul not want for them (v. 13)?

- When Jesus comes, who will come with Him (v. 14)?
- From whom did Paul get this information (v. 15)?
- What is certain for those who are still alive when He comes (v. 15)?
- What recognizable events will accompany Jesus' coming (v. 16)?
- After the dead rise, what will happen (v. 17)?
- What are we to do with this information (v. 18)?

Scriptural Insight: “According to the Lord’s word” (v. 15) means that this information came to Paul by revelation from the Lord, not just Paul’s opinion. It could have been an otherwise unrecorded saying of Christ. Or it could have come to Paul by direct revelation (cf. Acts 16:6; 18:9; 1 Cor. 2:10; 2 Cor. 12:1-4; Gal. 1:12, 16; Eph. 3:3). (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 51)

What does it mean?

The Thessalonians were apparently concerned that Christians who had died would miss the Lord’s coming and gathering of believers. Paul countered this with truth for them and for us to get a glimpse of what will occur. God has chosen to give this information to us.

In verses 13-15, the Bible describes three groups of people— (1) those who have “fallen asleep,” (2) those with no hope, and (3) those who are still alive when Jesus comes.

Those who have fallen asleep:

7. Jesus defined for us what "fallen asleep" means. Read John 11:11-15. When Jesus talked about Lazarus having fallen asleep, what did He mean?

8. Those who have "fallen asleep" are Christians who have died. Read 2 Corinthians 5:6-9 and Philippians 1:20-24. Summarize what you can know with confidence about what happens when a believer dies.

Focus on the Meaning: A believer falls asleep on earth and wakes up in heaven, passing from earth into the presence of the Lord. Death is like a comma between the two. We have the promise of being able to enjoy heaven and be recognizable. Based on 2 Corinthians 5:1-5, we know we will be given a heavenly body that will contain our soul until we get our new resurrected body at the time of the Rapture. One thing is for sure, we will be perfected and released from the struggle with sin through being set free from our mortal body.

9. Paul mentioned earlier in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 that Jesus would be bringing His holy ones with Him. Those are the ones who have fallen asleep in Him (v. 14), also known as the "dead in Christ" (v. 16). What will they experience?

Historical Insight: The [Romans] cremated bodies and placed the ashes in urns set in niches. These niches looked like dovecotes, so they were called *columbaria*. But the Christians used the name for the barracks of soldiers, *koimeterion*, from which we get "cemetery." Thus, at death, the believer falls asleep as at the sounding of Taps. But the angel will blow the trumpet of resurrection, just as the bugler sounds reveille. Then the dead in Christ will come out of the barracks of the dead, to be forever with their glorious Captain. (Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans Book VI*, p. 113)

Those who have no hope: These are the unsaved. We will cover this subject more in Lesson 9.

Those who are still alive:

10. The phrase "caught up" (v. 17, literally "snatched by force") was translated into Latin as *rapiemur* (the act of carrying off), which became *rapturo* in the medieval times. This event has been called "The Rapture" ever since. And the definition of rapture has changed to "joyful ecstasy" to match the event. 😊

- What will those believers who are still alive see, hear, and experience according to vv. 15- 17?
- Read Numbers 10:1-2. God commanded the silver trumpets to be used for what?
- Read John 11:43. What do you learn from Jesus' earthly example?

Scriptural Insight: The "loud command" was used in classical Greek for the shout with which an officer gives the order to his troops or his crew. It carries a ring of authority and a note of urgency (see John 11:43). The trumpet call was used to convene God's people to gather before Him (see Numbers 10:2). This trumpet call is not related to the seven trumpets of revelation because those are calls of judgment of God upon a Christ-rejecting world. By contrast, the trumpet call in 1 Thessalonians 4 is a call addressed to the saved, to those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. As to the angelic voice, we are not told more about this. The only archangel mentioned in Scripture is Michael (Jude 9). (Adapted from *Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2021 Edition*, pp. 53-55)

11. Read Titus 2:13. What did Paul call this event? Why was that a good choice of words?

12. From what you have learned so far, where does the believer go? See also John 14:1-3.

Scriptural Insight: All believers with their new bodies will join Jesus in the clouds and accompany Him back to heaven. Since "we will be with the Lord forever" from then on, we will go with Christ to His Father's house in heaven (John 14:2-3), return to earth with Him at His Second Coming (Revelation 19:14), participate in His earthly millennial kingdom with Him (Revelation 20:6), and finally dwell with Him in the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 21:3-4). (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, pp. 55-56)

13. Everything that takes place with the believers at the Rapture is initiated by the Lord and done by Him. Jesus Christ acts to gather His own and transport them from earth into His presence. Going back to the concern of the Thessalonians (vv. 13-15), is it possible for any believer, including you, to miss this event we call “the Rapture?” Why or why not?

Scriptural Insight: Paul and the other early Christians believed in the imminent (about to happen) return of Christ. For them, nothing had to occur before His return. The time of the Rapture has been a matter of disagreement among conservative interpreters. What we can know for sure is that Christians are not destined to experience the outpouring of God’s wrath (1:10; 5:9-10), which the Tribulation will include. There is no mention of the Tribulation in this passage, but that would be expected if it will precede the Rapture, especially since the Thessalonians were experiencing some tribulation. “Most who believe it will occur before the Tribulation base their belief on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 since it contains more detail about the Rapture than any other one. All conservative scholars agree that the translation of living Christians and the resurrection of dead Christians will take place at the same time. On this issue there is agreement, regardless of when the Rapture will occur in relation to the Tribulation.” (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2021 Edition*, p. 48)

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

14. As a believer, have you learned enough in this lesson to give you confidence and comfort about your death or the death of any Christian loved one? Look at the chart below to gain confidence about what happens when you die.

<p><i>What doesn’t happen at death</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not annihilation (Luke 16:19-31) • Not soul sleep (Philippians 1:23) • Not floating spirit (2 Cor. 5:3) • Not reincarnation (Hebrews 9:27) • Not purgatory (Colossians 1:22) • Not becoming an angel (Mark 9:4) 	<p><i>What happens at death</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall asleep on earth; wake up in heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:14) • Leave earthly tent; get heavenly dwelling fashioned for us (2 Cor. 5:1) • Be immediately at home with the lord (2 Cor. 5:8)
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Think About It: How will God raise the bodies of people who were buried hundreds of years ago? What about the bodies of those Christians who were burned to death and those whose ashes were thrown to the wind, and Christians who perished at sea? ... The God who created the universe out of nothing with a word is fully able to reassemble the decayed bodies of all His saints in a moment of time (see 1 Corinthians 15:35-38). (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 704)

15. Paul did not deny that the death of a believer brings grief to his or her loved ones. Jesus shared in his friends' grief (John 11:35). Nevertheless, Paul insisted that Christians need "not grieve" as those "who have no hope" grieve. How does knowing this glimpse into your future encourage you or give you hope in the midst of grief, suffering, or growing old?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will expand our study of life beyond death, especially the new bodies we will receive.

16. Read Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:2-3. What will happen when Jesus appears?

Focus on the Meaning: Dead Christians will experience resurrection from the dead as their bodies are recreated by God and joined with their spirits once again. Living [Christians] will experience what Bible scholars have termed "translation," meaning "the conversion of something from one form into another." This will happen instantly as they, too, get a resurrection body but without having to experience death first. All will have immortal bodies like Christ's body. This translation of living believers is the only interpretation that fits with Jesus' statements in John 14:1-3. Then, indeed, the believers will go from earth to heaven, to the place prepared in the Father's house. To the Greek mind, the resurrection of the body was an absurd idea. They thought that their body was evil, and only the soul was good. So, death rescued the soul from the body. Their thinking was this, "Why would anyone want to have a human body again?" The Greeks thought the resurrection was foolishness. Paul continually taught that Jesus' resurrection was absolutely essential to the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:12-20), and it was a foretaste of what every Christian will one day experience.

17. Read Luke 24:13-45. What do you learn about Jesus' resurrection body?

18. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-57. What do you learn about our future resurrection or translation?

19. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Contrast the Christian view of death and the afterlife with the views of non-Christian religions.

What the Bible teaches in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and the Scriptures above are intended to encourage the readers, including you. And we are to use these same words to encourage other Christians as we are waiting for His appearing to gather us together with Him.

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

20. Discuss your willingness to trust God and be content *not knowing when* Christ will appear but living as if it were today. How should you live now? Review 1 Thessalonians 3:13-4:1.

21. When you were a child, what did you imagine heaven to be like? As an adult, what do you imagine heaven to be like? Whom are you expecting/hoping to see there? Are you excited about your future? Feel free to use any creative means (poem, prose, song, drawing, craft) to describe your anticipation of this glorious event. This page is mostly blank for this purpose. Or search online for artists' renderings of the Rapture and be inspired. 😊

8: Perspective on Living in the Light

1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Trying to understand prophecy about the future is like having a bunch of puzzle pieces that look similar but without the picture on the box top to tell you how to arrange them. All we know for sure are the border pieces. We can put the 4 sides of the puzzle together. Those are events we know will definitely happen, but we don't know when or how the rest of the pieces fit inside the border. Paul described one such event in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. This is Christ appearing as Savior to gather all believers, dead and alive, together with Him in the clouds. A second event is the Great Tribulation during which God's wrath against sin is directed toward earth. That is introduced to us in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.

What does the Bible say?

Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. 12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; 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, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. 25 Brethren, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. 27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.

4. What topics (if any) in this passage have we studied in previous lessons?

5. **Gain perspective:** From this lesson's passage (5:1-28), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Scriptural Insight: "The day of the Lord" refers to a future time in which God will be more directly and dramatically involved in world affairs than He has been since the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. That day begins immediately after the Rapture of the church, includes the Lord's judgment against sin (Revelation 6-18), and ends with the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20). In the New Testament, the phrase "the last days" for Christians refers to that time period between Christ's ascension and His appearing to gather His own (at the Rapture). (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 705)

What does it mean?

We will cover vv. 1-3 in the next two lessons. Today, we will focus on vv. 4-11.

This is a section about identity—to whom/what you belong and give allegiance. Paul used a lot of imagery contrasts (night/day, sleep/awake) to help us understand what it means to live according to your identity in this time until Jesus comes for us.

Focus on the Meaning: "Darkness" was a common negative figure in antiquity. In the Old and New Testaments, it describes those who are ignorant of or opposed to the Lord (Ps. 82:5; Prov. 4:19; Rom. 13:12). It also describes life apart from God (John 3:19; 8:12). (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 69)

6. Unbelievers live in the kingdom of darkness (John 1:5), and “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4). According to the following verses, what has God done for believers to rescue us from that condition?

- 2 Corinthians 4:6—
- Colossians 1:13—

7. Because of this rescue...

- What is now our identity (1 Thessalonians 5:5)?
- As children of the light/day, what state of mind should we maintain regarding daily life (v. 6) See also Mark 13:32-37.

8. The word Paul used that is translated “awake” means to be alert, not insensible. His word translated “sober” means to be calm and collected in spirit, to not be drunk.

- With those definitions in mind, what would it look like in a believer’s life to be “awake and sober?” See also Ephesians 5:8-11.
- What would the opposite look like (v. 7)?

Focus on the Meaning: The Lord Jesus does not come to the church like a thief in the night. The church is looking for and waiting for the Lord to come. ... However, the Lord Jesus does come like a thief to the world after the church has been raptured. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 65)

9. While being awake and sober, what else are we to do (v. 8) and how would that help us live through times of suffering like the Thessalonians were experiencing?

Scriptural Insight: Paul didn't invent the armor analogy. God did. See Isaiah 59:15-17. When the Lord saw the need, He acted. Notice the armor He put on to meet the challenge. Paul built on God's example and applied it to Christians putting on God's armor, first here in 1 Thessalonians then more expanded in Ephesians 6:10-17. It is all still God's armor we are wearing. He gives it to us to wear.

10. In verses 9-10, what comfort did Paul give to the Thessalonian believers in the anticipation of the coming "day of the Lord?"

There are two aspects of God's wrath in the New Testament: (1) His anger against sin (Romans 1:18) and (2) the judgment of God on the unbelieving world during the Tribulation. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross appeased God's anger against sin for anyone who trusts in Christ. Therefore, every Christian is already saved from God's general wrath against sin. All Christians are also promised in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 and 1:10 that we will be delivered from the wrath to come. Both verses are strong evidence that believers will be raptured before the Great Tribulation described in Revelation 6-19.

Scriptural Insight: That's how God worked in His other times of judgment. In Genesis chapter 7, God told Noah and his family when to get in the Ark for their safety. After they were safely out of the way, He brought the judgment of the Flood. In Genesis chapter 19, God sent angels to rescue Lot and his family out of Sodom. As soon as they were safely out of the way, He brought the judgment of fire. Jesus confirmed that pattern in Luke 17:26-30 and said that God's plan for us is the same.

11. Why would knowing the truths about the appearing of the Lord for His own be reason to "encourage one another and build each other up" (v. 11)?

Focus on the Meaning: Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:10 could refer to those believers who are alive or dead as well as those who are watchful or not watchful (spiritually lazy). Regardless, it is clear that Jesus will snatch away all Christians at the Rapture. He initiates and carries it out. Not one believer will be forgotten and left behind. This certainly feeds our hope!

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

12. Were you raised with the misconception that you couldn't be holy enough to escape God's wrath? What have you learned that convinces you what you were taught is not true?

13. Christians often fill their time with church activities and surround themselves with church friends. Over time, this may develop a critical "stay away from me" attitude towards the unbelievers around us. But we all know those who do not believe in Christ, maybe in your own family, workplace, and neighborhood.

- Why should you have compassion on those who have not experienced God's grace?
- Consider just one non-Christian woman in your life right now. Ask Jesus to give you His love and compassion for her and to help you understand what she is feeling and needing from Him. How can you make the most of your connection to build a relationship with her so that you can show Jesus' love and compassion to her?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 12-28.

In vv. 12-15, we see application of v. 11 in community with other believers. Believers live in a unique relationship with one another. We have a common destiny and a mutual responsibility to each other. But these behaviors also shine light into darkness for unbelievers who are watching us.

14. Paul first addressed our responsibility to our spiritual leaders.

- How should you treat your spiritual leaders (vv. 12-13)? See also 1 Timothy 5:17-19.
- How would these actions encourage believers and shine light for unbelievers?

Scriptural Insight: Clearly there were teachers in the Thessalonian church, even though it was a new church. We may assume, therefore, that the apostles had appointed leaders in this church before they departed from Thessalonica, as they had done in the churches of Galatia (cf. Acts 14:23). These leaders were probably Jews who had a solid background in the Hebrew Bible and had come to faith in Christ. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 73)

15. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Research other verses that describe the work of our spiritual shepherds and what our response should be to them. Start with Acts 20:28-32.

Paul then addressed our responsibility to other members of the Body of Christ.

16. Looking at v. 14, "Idle and disruptive" translates a Greek word meaning unruly, undisciplined. We will cover this again in Lesson 11.

- What are the instructions to believers? See also 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.
- How would these actions encourage believers and shine light for unbelievers?

17. Looking at v. 15:

- What are the instructions to believers?
- How would these actions encourage believers and shine light for unbelievers?

In vv. 16-22, we see more application of v. 5 (being children of the light) but this time from a personal spiritual life perspective. The commands in vv. 16-18 transcend all cultures at all times! These are all God's will for you in Christ Jesus (v. 18). As you consider each one, look throughout 1 Thessalonians for Paul's examples.

18. Rejoice always (v. 16). Note: this is one of ~70 New Testament commands to "Rejoice!"

- In whom or what should you rejoice? See also Philippians 4:4 and 1 Thessalonians 1:6.
- In what practical ways can you add rejoicing to your life?

19. Pray continually (v. 17). The imagery described by the Greek adverb translated "continually" is that of a lingering cough. It's not constant but frequent. See how often Paul interjects prayer throughout his letter. In what practical ways can you do this?

Dependent Living: If we live in this way, conscious continually of our dependence on God, conscious of His presence with us always, conscious of His will to bless, then our general spirit of prayerfulness will in the most natural way overflow into uttered prayer. It is instructive to read again and again in Paul's letters the many prayers that he interjects. Prayer was as natural to Paul as breathing. At any time, he was likely to break off his argument or to sum it up by some prayer of greater or less length. In the same way, our lives can be lived in such an attitude of dependence on God that we will easily and naturally move into the words of prayer on all sorts of occasions, great and small, grave and [happy]. Prayer is to be constant. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 76)

20. Give thanks in all circumstances (v. 18), not necessarily "for" all circumstances. In what practical ways can you do this?

21. Do not quench the Spirit (v. 19). One of the biblical symbols for the Holy Spirit is “fire.” No believer can fully extinguish the Holy Spirit’s fire inside you. But the word “quench” can also mean to stifle or suppress the fire’s influence. What would it look like to quench (stifle or suppress) the work of the Spirit in your life? See also 1 Thessalonians 3:3,5 and 4:4-6, 8.

Dependent Living: Believers can hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives by living as self-reliant, independent-of-God creatures. Although we can resist His work, that doesn’t stop His work to conform us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Because that is His goal, He may bring things into our lives that force us to depend on God more than on ourselves (2 Corinthians 1:9). As Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6, what God started in us, He will complete. We can cooperate with the Spirit by yielding to His work and letting Him transform us (Romans 12:1-2).

22. Looking at vv. 20-22, Paul referred to prophecies.

Focus on the Meaning: The New Testament gift of prophecy was the ability to receive and communicate direct revelations from God before the New Testament was completed. The testing of what was revealed through speaking or writing resulted in our New Testament canon. Those writings have been authenticated, along with the entire Old Testament, to be God’s prophetic teaching to all of us. All of it is good. A modern application of this “testing” can be directed toward any current teaching claiming to be divinely inspired and declaring the purposes of God.

- Regarding that which has already passed the test to be considered God’s Word, how are we to respond? See John 8:31-32; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 4:8; and 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
- Regarding modern teaching that claims to be truth from God, what are we to do with it? How would you do that?

23. Read vv. 23-24 again. To sanctify means to set apart from anything evil, to make holy as God is holy and separate from evil. See also 1 Thessalonians 3:13.

- What will the God of peace do for all of us?

- How does this truth encourage you and feed your hope?

24. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Compare how Paul ended this letter with how he ended other letters to churches. Read these verses, which are listed in chronological order. Galatians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:25-28; 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18; 1 Corinthians 16:19-24; 2 Corinthians 13:12-14; Ephesians 6:23-24; Philippians 4:21-23; and Colossians 4:16-18. What similarities do you notice? What helped people to know these were genuinely from Paul?

What application will you make to gain a biblical perspective?

25. Review how we are to live as children of the light (vv. 6, 8, 11, 13-22). If you have those verses firmly entrenched in your life, what impact would that make on ...

- Your personal spiritual life?

- Your life in the community of Christ (especially your local church)?

- Persecution you may face?

- Drawing non-believers to Christ who are in your sphere of influence?

Pray 1 Thessalonians 5:23 for yourself and others.

9: Perspective on God's Justice

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Historical Insight: A few months after the Thessalonians received Paul's first letter, someone reported news of the church back to Paul. The good news was that most of the Thessalonians were growing in their faith and love for each other in spite of persecution. But there still seemed to be confusion about "the day of the Lord." Also, the expectation of the Lord's imminent return had caused some to quit their jobs and just "wait." Being confused as well as idle is never a good combination for people, even Christians. So, Paul wrote the letter called 2 Thessalonians within 6-12 months of the first one. Chronologically, it is Paul's third letter in our New Testament, assuming Galatians was his first.

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

Trying to understand prophecy about the future is like having a bunch of puzzle pieces that look similar but without the picture on the box top to tell you how to arrange them. All we know for sure are the border pieces. We can put the 4 sides of the puzzle together. Those are events we know will definitely happen, but we don't know when or how the rest of the pieces fit inside the border. We have looked at two events in our study so far. Another event is introduced to us in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. It is Christ coming in judgment on unbelievers and setting up His kingdom on earth.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say?

Let's start digging into this wonderful letter from God to us. Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, 5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; 6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. 11 Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?
2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?
3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.
4. What topics (if any) in this passage have we studied in previous lessons?
5. **Gain perspective:** From this lesson's passage (1:1-12), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 5-10. This section deals with God's judgment and justice.

What does it mean?

Focus on the Meaning: God is just. To be just means that you are always doing what is morally right and fair. Our God always acts with justice. It is the natural expression of His holiness. Remember we said that God's holiness always sets Him apart from anything that is sinful or evil. The Bible says that God hates sin and has declared that sin is wrong and must be punished by death. Jesus paid the penalty for sin that God's justice demands. The word translated "judgment" in v. 5 means "separating out." God separates the saved from the ones who reject Him.

6. In 2 Thessalonians 1:5, Paul declared that God's judgment is right. The Thessalonians would be counted worthy of God's kingdom. Read Romans 3:21-26. On what basis does God declare anyone worthy of His kingdom?

Think About It: God called us and counted us worthy in Christ before the process of making us worthy in Christ is completed.

6. In v. 6 (and 1 Thessalonians 4:6), Paul described our just God acting in the role of an Avenger.

- What does an avenger do?
- How will our just God act as an avenger (vv. 6-7, first part)?
- When will this happen for sure (v. 7)?

Scriptural Insight: Powerful angels and blazing fire represent judgment. This return of Christ is not the Rapture as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17, which is for Christians and completes their salvation from all of God's wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9). This is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 19). This is not a reference to the Rapture.

8. Why should knowing that God will avenge wrongs done to believers give relief to the Thessalonians (and to us).

Focus on the Meaning: Although God will act as avenger during His judgment on unbelievers in the future, He could and does act as avenger for us in our lifetimes.

In Lesson 8, we learned that “the day of the Lord” refers to a future time in which God will be more directly and dramatically involved in world affairs than He has been since the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. That day begins immediately after the Rapture of the church, includes the Lord’s wrath against sin (Revelation 6-18), Christ’s Second Coming in blazing fire (Revelation 19), and ends with the conclusion of His Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20).

9. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 and Matthew 24:36-39.

- What is the warning?
- Has God been faithful to warn mankind about impending judgment in the past?
- Is there any real reason not to heed His warning of coming judgment on the unbelieving world?
-

10. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:8, God’s judgment falls on whom? See also Acts 17:30-31 and Romans 1:18-20.

Think About It: The Rapture removes God’s representatives from earth at once. The unbelievers left behind will for a short time experience what they want—being away from the knowledge and presence of God. Yet, God will use the time of judgment to draw more people to Him in faith by sending witnesses (Revelation 11). Even in judgment, He is good.

God makes His offer of amnesty to all humans so easy. God has done everything possible to communicate to every human that He exists and loves them. The Gospel is the Lord’s message of hope and salvation. The only stipulation is that you must personally accept the message through faith in Jesus Christ. Just believe in His Son Jesus Christ. Yet, human arrogance and independence prefers to turn away from the enormous treasure they would have in Jesus Christ. Sadly, many refuse God’s gracious offer. Those who reject Christ will, in turn, experience God’s rejection and the loss of everything worthwhile in life. It is their choice of destiny. Every human is an immortal being. You are a soul. You have a body. Once your body dies, your soul continues. It is not annihilated at death as the atheists teach.

11. How did Paul describe eternal hell in verse 9?

Focus on the Meaning: [All] non-Christians will suffer, literally "pay a penalty," of "eternal destruction." Their fate is eternal separation from the person of Christ ("presence of the Lord") and from the manifestation of His "glory." It is not reincarnation. This is Paul's most explicit reference to the eternal duration of unbelievers' judgment in all his writings. Those who reject Christ will, in turn, experience God's rejection ... separation from God and loss of everything worthwhile in life. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 2 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 11)

Do you have a problem accepting the reality of hell? The Bible consistently teaches this to be the destiny for the unbeliever—for everyone who rejects God's goodness and His grace given to anyone who puts their faith in Jesus Christ (v. 8). God sends no one to hell. Every individual who rejects God is making that choice for themselves.

12. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Jesus talked about hell and judgment more than anyone else in the Bible. It was the penalty for sin (Romans 6:23). He came to pay that penalty for sin. Use a concordance to find references in the gospels to hell, or go to gotquestions.org and type in the question "Does hell exist?"

13. Considering all Christians at His Second Coming (those already raptured and returning with Him or those alive on earth when He comes down), what will be our response to Jesus being our avenger (v. 10)?

Think About It: The idea is that the glory of that day [Jesus' Second Coming] will far surpass anything of which we can have any idea before we behold it, and when we do behold it, we shall be lost in amazement. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 2 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 12)

What application will you make to gain perspective?

14. How should this information impact your concern for the unbeliever? Does it?

Think About It: Every wicked person can become a saved person through faith in Jesus Christ. The opportunity is available to them until their dying breath.

15. Though we can be assured that God will at a future time avenge wrongs done to us, that doesn't preclude Him acting as an avenger for us today. Have you recognized a time when God acted as your avenger? Describe what happened and how you felt.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 1-4, 11-12. This is addressed to believers alive while waiting for Christ.

16. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 then read 2 Thessalonians 1:3. How had God answered Paul's prayers for the Thessalonian Christians?

Think About It: The phrase concerning their faith "growing more and more" in the Greek means to grow exceedingly large and tall like trees by a wilderness stream. The word for their love "increasing" means to spread out like a flood. Aren't those beautiful work pictures? God will always answer those prayers. Asking for your faith and love to grow is in His will. Asking for perseverance during trials is also in His will. He will say, "Yes!"

17. Paul boasted about their perseverance (v. 4).

Focus on the Meaning: The Greek word translated "perseverance" (v. 4) is a strong word that means "bearing under." It's holding up a load with staying power and stick-to-it-iveness. Our English word *perseverance* means "holding to a course of action, a belief, or a purpose without giving way." It is the quality that enables a person to stand on her feet when facing a storm head on. It carries the idea of whole life experience, not just getting stuck in traffic. It means staying faithful no matter what.

- Considering the Thessalonians, what were they experiencing?

- What had they not done? See 1 Thessalonians 3:3-5.
- Why would their staying faithful to Christ through suffering have encouraged Paul? See also 1 Thessalonians 3:7

18. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12. Keeping in mind what will take place in our future, we can pray for each other concerning how to live now in the waiting. For what did Paul pray (v. 11)?

What application will you make to gain perspective?

19. God’s will for us is to be like Christ—to be perfect as He is perfect. That involves His part of transforming us and our part of response. According to v. 11, God’s power can bring to fruition what we desire to have and do for Him as we are becoming more like Christ. Our part is having the desires for goodness and wanting to do the deeds prompted by faith that make us more like Christ. Then, asking the Lord to make those happen in our lives. This is also His will. He will say “yes” to this prayer.

His part:

- Read Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; and Philippians 1:6. This is God’s part. What will He do?

Your part:

- What are your “desires for goodness?”

- What “deeds prompted by faith” would you like to do?

- Ask the Lord Jesus to use His power to bring to fruition those desires for goodness and deeds prompted by your faith in Him.

Scriptural Insight: Paul consistently made what God has done for believers the basis of his appeals for them to lead lives in keeping with their destiny. Christians do not live worthily in order to obtain salvation but because they have been granted salvation. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 716)

20. As you respond to God’s work in your life, what will be the result (v. 12)?

Pray 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 for yourself and others.

10: Perspective on the Great Tribulation

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

Trying to understand prophecy about the future is like having a bunch of puzzle pieces that look similar but without the picture on the box top to tell you how to arrange them. All we know for sure are the border pieces. We can put the 4 sides of the puzzle together. Those are events we know will definitely happen, but we don't know when or how the rest of the pieces fit inside the border.

We have been introduced to three events in our study so far—the Rapture, the wrath of God in the Tribulation, and Christ's second coming to judge unbelievers and set up His kingdom on earth. We will see a fourth event in this lesson—the revealing of the “man of lawlessness” (Antichrist).

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say?

Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?
2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?
3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.
4. What topics (if any) in this passage have we previously studied in 1 or 2 Thessalonians?
5. **Gain perspective:** From this lesson's passage (2:1-17), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we are going to focus on vv. 1-12. Remember that these letters were written 40 years before the book of Revelation and 20 years before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

Scriptural Insight: "The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "our gathering together to Him" both refer to the Rapture of the church. Paul had used the term "the coming" (*parousia*) of the Lord four times in 1 Thessalonians (2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23), and in every case, it refers to the Rapture. "Our gathering together to Him" also refers to ... the Rapture. ... The "day of the Lord" is a time of God's judgment and wrath against evil. It includes the Tribulation, the Millennium, and the Great White Throne. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 2 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, pp. 17, 19)

6. Verse 1 reviews Paul's reason for writing this letter and refers back to a question he obviously addressed in the first letter (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:10) regarding the coming of the Lord for believers. What was unsettling the Thessalonians (v. 2) and why?

Scriptural Insight: If Paul had taught the Thessalonians that the Rapture wouldn't occur until after the terrible day of the Lord, they would not have been unsettled by the bad things happening to them. Their dismay confirms that Paul taught them the Rapture would come before God's wrath would be poured out on the earth.

To reinforce the truth he had already taught them, Paul reminded them that three things will happen when the judgments associated with the day of the Lord begin. These three "signs" are the rebellion (v. 3), the man of lawlessness being revealed (v. 3), and he who now holds him back being taken away (v. 7). This will bring about the time period called the Great Tribulation described in Daniel 9, the Gospels (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) and Revelation. The presence of the definite article "the" with each event identifies it as unique. No other events are exactly like them. Let's look at these three signs individually, starting with the third one.

The restrainer removed

7. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7. The Greek word translated "holding back" carries the idea of restraining and hindering. So, we will refer to the one holding back as the restrainer.

- The man of lawlessness is under the control of Satan (v. 9). Only something stronger than Satan could restrain him. Who is on the earth and has power stronger than Satan?
- In what ways does the Holy Spirit presently restrain the power of lawlessness/evil in the world? See 1 Thessalonians 1:4-9; Titus 2:11-14; and other verses you know.

Think About It: It is presently as though the Holy Spirit was blocking the doorway so that Lawlessness (personified) could not enter. But at the Rapture, He will step aside, and Lawlessness will rush in ... [and] overwhelm the world. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 2 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 29)

- The Holy Spirit is active in our world through the life and work of believers. Consider what will happen when the Church is removed. How will this event affect the power of lawlessness?

Scriptural Insight: The word translated “secret” in v. 7 is actually the Greek word for “mystery.” A mystery in the Bible is truth previously not revealed but now made known by God. The mystery being revealed here is [what] would follow the removal of the restrainer. ... This lawless movement was already underway in Paul’s day, but God was holding it back until His appointed time ... God will remove the Holy Spirit [the restraining influence] from the earth in the sense that God will remove those whom He indwells, and He with them. He will not entirely abandon the earth, of course, since God is omnipresent. (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on 2 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 28)

The rebellion against God

From the Greek: The Greek word translated “rebellion” in v. 3 is *apostasia*, meaning “falling away.” It is where we get our English word apostasy. By definition, an apostasy is an abandoning of a position formerly held. It does not mean simply disbelieving, but it is an aggressive and positive revolt. ... In the Greek Old Testament, we find it used of rebellion against God, and this becomes the accepted Biblical usage. (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on 2 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 21)

Apostasy is falling away from truth that you once believed. It has been with us since the first century. And the apostles wrote about apostasy growing worse and worse through the years before the Lord comes. Apostasy is driven by people who may even call themselves “Christian” but who have not personally put their faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation. They are influential fakers, who draw people away from Christ.

Remember that all genuine Christians who have trusted Christ and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit will go to be with the Lord in the Rapture so you won’t be affected by this rebellion (1Thessalonians 1:10). The unbelievers who are left behind will be enticed to join this universal rebellion against God. Perhaps the Rapture will draw some to finally put their faith in Jesus Christ and be saved, though they must live through the Tribulation.

8. Read the following verses to see what identifies such influential fakers even today and the harm they do.

- 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15—

- 1 Timothy 4:1-2—
- 2 Timothy 4:3-4—

Think About It: What about professing Christians on the public stage (authors, worship singers, actors) who claim they no longer believe today? That seems to happen on a regular basis. Only God knows their true natures, whether believers or not. If they are true Christians, the Holy Spirit will work on their hearts to bring them back to the Lord. If they are not true Christians, they fit the descriptions you read about in the verses above.

The man of lawlessness revealed

Reading what Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 is pretty scary. This person, also known as the Antichrist in other passages, had not yet appeared when Paul wrote, nor has he appeared since that time no matter how evil some historical persons have been. How do we know that? The Rapture of the church has not taken place. The man of lawlessness will not be revealed until after that.

9. Let's look at the characteristics describing this man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2. Think of him as a counterfeit to Christ.

- v.4—
- v.9—
- v.10—

Think About It: Deception allows apostasy to build. Apostasy allows the man of lawlessness to begin his rise so when the Spirit is removed, he's there ready to take the role.. But we won't know who it is. And until the restrainer is removed, the Antichrist can do nothing of this magnitude.

10. The prophet Daniel spoke of this person, calling him the "ruler who will come." Read Daniel 9:24-27. What additional information do you learn?

11. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Matthew 24:1-35; Mark 13:3-34; and Luke 21:5-35 describe what will take place during the day of the Lord's judgment (the Great Tribulation) and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to earth. These signs are not in chronological order. Remember that this occurs after the Rapture, so you will be in heaven during this time.

The Great Tribulation will be characterized by unrestrained evil. We don't need to get carried away with the Great Tribulation will be like and how very deceptively evil the Antichrist will be. But God has revealed to us some truth in 2 Thessalonians about the future of him and those who join with him in the rebellion against God.

12. What is the fate of "the man of lawlessness" according to vv. 3 and 8?

From the Greek: The Lord's "coming" (v. 8, Gr. *epiphaneia*) is a different, and later event than the "gathering" (Gr. *episynagoges*) event (v. 1). The first event is the Rapture, and the second is the Second Coming. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on 2 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 30)

13. What is the destiny of all those who are deceived by the man of lawlessness and delight in wickedness (vv. 10-12)? Why is that their destiny? See also 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 and Romans 1:18-20.

Focus on the Meaning: Here is the definite judicial act of God who gives the wicked over to the evil which they have deliberately chosen." (A. T. Robertson, *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 2 Thessalonians 2:11)

Paul did not regard prophecy as too deep or unimportant for even new Christians. He believed prophetic truth was a vital part of the whole counsel of God, essential to victorious Christian living. He revealed what God wants us to know about our future to give us encouragement and hope and confidence in His sovereign plan for our world and all who are in it. But the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3). So God is the only one who knows when these things will take place. Humans can do nothing to make it happen any sooner than God chooses.

14. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Reread 2 Thessalonians 2:2. The opposite attitude toward the day of the Lord can also be taken and is prevalent today. Read 2 Peter 3:3-7. What attitude does Peter warn about? What scripture do people with this attitude have to ignore or explain away? Describe any experiences you have had with people/churches who maintain the same attitude that Peter describes. What gives them hope, if not the return of Christ?

What application will you make to gain perspective?

15. Read 2 Timothy 4:3-4 again. That describes a process by which we can become willing participants in our own deception. We can't determine the identity of "the man of lawlessness" or know the exact time of the Rapture. We can do something about apostasy in our own lives and in those within our spheres of influence.

- How do you see what Paul described taking place in our world? Do you personally know anyone like those described? How will you pray for them specifically?

- Are you careful to critically analyze what you see, read, and hear? How do you know if it is biblical truth or not?

16. Consider those professing Christians on the public stage (authors, worship singers, actors) who claim they no longer believe today. These modern-day influencers are often praised in social media for having the courage to publicly express their doubts and renounce their faith/belief system. How can we as believers respond to this in such a way as to promote honest discussion about their doubts while continuing to stand firm in the truth of God's Word?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 13-17.

17. In contrast to the lawless unbelievers just referenced in v. 12, Paul was grateful that he could “always thank God” for the Thessalonians. He confirmed again who they are in the mind of God. Note: “Firstfruits” refers to the first part of a harvest offered to God. The harvest began at Pentecost and continues until Jesus returns.

- What did Paul say about the Thessalonians believers in v. 13?

Focus on the Meaning: The word translated “loved by the Lord” is the same word used when God said about Jesus, “You are my Son, whom I love” in Mark 1:11; 9:7. You are loved that much! Also, the word translated “chosen” meant to lift up, to move something toward the sun. We are definitely lifted up by our God, aren’t we?

18. God called them through the gospel so they might share in “the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 14). Read John 17:10, 22, 24 and 2 Thessalonians 1:12. What do you learn that helps you to understand sharing in His glory?

19. Because of being chosen, sanctified, and destined for a future share in Christ’s glory...

- What should we as believers continue to do now (v. 15)?
- What does it mean to “hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you?” To what teachings was Paul referring? Refer back to 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 4:8.

Focus on the Meaning: Inspired tradition, in Paul’s sense, is not a supplementary oral tradition completing *our* written Word, but it is identical with the written Word *now* complete... [since] the death of St. John, the last apostle. (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on 2 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, p. 36)

20. Looking at vv. 16-17: Paul wrote out what he was praying for the Thessalonians throughout both of his letters.

- This time, Paul asked God for what?
- How would knowing what he prayed for them add to their encouragement to stand firm?
- Although God is the Ultimate Encourager, whom does He often use? See 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 6-9 and any other verses you can add.

Focus on the Meaning: Paul addressed his prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ as well as to God the Father (also 1 Thessalonians 3:11). It's okay to address prayer to Jesus. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally God, equally powerful, and equally involved in answering our prayer (Romans 8:26-27; 34).

What application will you make to gain perspective?

21. We are blessed and instructed as we read Paul's written prayers in the New Testament letters that he wrote under the Holy Spirit's inspiration. When you correspond with someone who is going through a tough time, do you write out your specific prayer for them in your emails, texts, or on social media? Why or why not? Consider beginning this practice today and watch what God does through that encouragement.

22. Considering this whole chapter, the wrath of God's judgment displayed in "the day of the Lord" sounds awful. But our God has given us "good hope" (v. 16). How does knowing that you will be gathered up with Christ in the Rapture and not experience the awfulness of the day of the Lord give you comfort, hope, and keep you from *giving way to fear*? Can you trust Him to carry out His plans and still take care of you?

Praise God for His great salvation for you and me who have chosen to love the truth and believe His gospel!

Pray 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 for yourself and others.

11: Perspective on Life in the Waiting

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say?

Read the Bible passage below (NKJV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, 2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. 5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. 6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. 14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother. 16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. 17 The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What words or phrases are repeated in this passage? Give verses.

4. What topics (if any) in this passage have we previously studied in 1 or 2 Thessalonians?

5. **Gain perspective:** From this lesson's passage (3:1-18), choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Today, we will focus on vv. 1-5.

6. In 1 Thessalonians 5:25, Paul had asked them to pray for him and his co-workers. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 3:7,10,11. For what did he need the Thessalonians to pray for him?

7. In 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, Paul asked them to pray for him. What prayer needs did he share with them?

Focus on the Meaning: Notice the two parts of his prayer. First comes the spreading of the message as we have seen in 1 Thessalonians 1:5,8 and 2:2. The second part is for people to receive the message. See 1 Thessalonians 1:6 and 2:13.

8. Ten years after writing 2 Thessalonians, Paul was confined in a Roman house and chained to a Roman soldier. Read Colossians 4:3-4. After all those years of preaching the gospel and establishing churches, what do these verses reflect about his heart and humility?

9. In 2 Thessalonians 3:2, the word "delivered" means *rescued, away from*. Paul was in Corinth writing this letter.

- Read Acts 18:5-17. What was happening there?

- Assuming the Thessalonians prayed for him, how did God answer their prayer?

10. God used both personal assurance to Paul through His Word as well as a government official who was not even a Christian.

- We have His word with us in our Bible. What does the Holy Spirit do with that to deliver us from our fear? See also John 16:13 and 1 Corinthians 2:10-13.

- We have governmental authorities. Read Romans 13:1-4 and 1 Timothy 2:1-4. How does God use authorities to benefit His people?

Scriptural Insight: Regarding authorities commending those who do right and punishing those who do wrong, Paul is not stating that this will always be true but is describing the proper, ideal function of rulers. When civil rulers overstep their proper function, the Christian is to obey God rather than man (see Acts 4:19; 5:29). (*NIV Study Bible*, note on Romans 13:3, p. 1726)

11. Looking at 2 Thessalonians 3:3-4:

- What does it mean that God is faithful? Faithful to whom? To do what? See also 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 and Philippians 1:6; 2:13.

- How did knowing that God is faithful give Paul confidence that the Thessalonians would mature in their faith? See 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4.

Scriptural Insight: The character of God should be the basis for a Christian's confidence. Because God has promised to supply believers' needs, Paul could rest in the assurance that He would provide strength to withstand temptation and trials, and protection from the adversary and his emissaries. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 722)

12. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:5 again. Paul is about to exhort the church to discipline some of their own (vv. 6-15). How would having God's love (for God and for others) and Christ's perseverance help them to be obedient to the Lord's commands and address the problems in the church?

What application will you make to gain perspective?

13. Are you confident in God? Do you know without a shadow of a doubt, that He who is faithful, will always be there for you? Explain your answer and how this gives you encouragement in your own prayer life.

14. Respond to the Lord about what you learned today by adapting the words from 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 into a prayer for yourself. Then, say those words to the Lord, expecting Him to answer because those are within His will for you.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

First, we will focus on vv. 6-15.

From the Greek: The description “idle and disruptive” translates a Greek word meaning “disorderly, out of ranks (as for a soldier), deviating from the prescribed rule of order.” It is someone who is unruly (“disorderly and disruptive and not amenable to discipline or control”) who is affecting the lives of others. The Greek word translated “busybody” means “to bustle about uselessly, to busy one’s self about trifling, needless, useless matters.” This is a problem to which idleness often leads.

Idleness must have been a common problem in Thessalonica as Paul mentions it several times (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 5:14). Review what you learned in Lesson 6 Day Three Study.

15. Look at vv. 6 and 11.

- Paul says to stay away from whom?
- Why is being a busybody rather than a busy worker not good?

Scriptural Insight: The proper management of one’s home and family is considered to be work (2 Timothy 5:11-14).

16. In what ways does an idle and disruptive person affect...

- Herself—

- Others around her (family, neighbors, co-workers)—

- An entire organization—

Focus on the Meaning: The word translated “keep away” means to diminish contact, remove oneself, withdraw, or abstain from familiar interaction. Paul’s rebuke is to those who **would not** work, not those who could not work. This is a very important difference. God’s Word gives many ways to help those who are poor or unable to work.

17. What is Paul’s rebuke and command to those who are idle and disruptive busybodies (vv. 12- 13)?

From the Greek: The Greek word translated “settle down (NIV)” or “work quietly (ESV)” in verse 12 points to the quality of mind that is to be associated with their working. It denotes a condition of inward peace and tranquility reflecting itself in outward calmness. It is the opposite of their fussy activity as busybodies.

18. Discuss Paul’s advice to the church members who are not idle and disruptive—what to do and why (vv. 6, 14-15). See 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 and 2 Corinthians 2:5-7 for a similar situation.

Scriptural Insight: The faithful majority in the church was to separate, probably individually and socially, from the unruly to alert the offenders to the fact that their behavior was not acceptable. The desired result was that they would repent. Paul had earlier warned those who were idle (1 Thess. 5:14), but evidently, they had not responded. Now firmer measures were necessary (cf. Matt. 18:15-17). The offenders constituted a minority who lived undisciplined lives contrary to the teaching and example of the missionaries. (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on 2 Thessalonians 2020 Edition*, pp. 40-41)

19. Paul and his team could have expected to be paid for their teaching but chose not to do so. From 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10, what example did Paul and his companions set as the proper attitude toward work? See also 1 Thessalonians 2:9.

Think About It: Don't get alarmed by the phrase "day and night." Remember that Paul and his team were single men who considered the Thessalonians to be their family. They were not neglecting their family just to earn more money (greed) or to gain prestige for themselves (pleasing men, 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6). In everything, they aimed to please God.

20. Work is good. God is a worker, and He has designed us to be purposeful with our time, energy, and skills. We are co-workers with Him (Psalm 8:4-6; Ephesians 2:10; and 2 Thessalonians 1:11). Read Colossians 3:22-24 and Ephesians 6:5-9. Although slavery is always wrong, these verses relate to all work that you do.

- How are believers to do any work?

- What would that look like in your life regarding all work that you do regardless of where?

21. Why should Christians make the best employees? See also 1 Thessalonians 4:1,11-12.

22. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** One of the many benefits of work is provision for yourself and your family. Another benefit is having enough to share with others. Read Galatians 6:7- 10; 2 Corinthians 9:10-15; and 1 Timothy 6:18-19. What do you learn?

23. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18 again. For what can we pray and why?

Paul's ending to this letter included words he penned himself so his letters could be distinguished as authentic. See also 1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; and Colossians 4:18. This avoided the problem of forgeries, as in 2 Thessalonians 2:2. The church leaders knew for sure which ones were definitely from him. This should give you confidence that these letters you've studied were written by Paul as declared in the salutations.

What application will you make to gain perspective?

24. Is there an idle and disruptive person affecting your life? Are you the idle and disruptive person affecting your life? How will you apply what you have learned in this lesson?

25. Considering yourself as a worker:

- Whether your employer is a business or your home, in what practical ways can you commit to working hard?

- How has your work ethic already benefited you and others around you? Are you inspiring those in your sphere of influence to have an excellent work ethic?

26. How has this study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians changed or sharpened your perspective about life in the future and life in the waiting "until" Jesus appears?

Historical Insight: What happened to the church? Ancient Thessalonica is known today by its original name, Thessaloniki. In the middle of the second century, the Emperor Antoninus Pius wrote to the people of Thessalonica, telling them to take no new steps against the Christians, implying the church was still active. At the beginning of the third century, Tertullian couples it with Philippi as a church where the original letters of the Apostles are still being read. For centuries, the city remained one of the chief strongholds of Christianity, and it won for itself the title of "the Orthodox City," not only by the tenacity and vigor of its resistance to the successive attacks of various barbarous races, but also by being largely responsible for their conversion to Christianity. Modern Thessaloniki is second only to Athens in population. During World War I, it served as an important Allied base. In World War II, it was captured by the German army, and the large Jewish population was deported. At present, only a minority of the inhabitants are Christians. The modern city is rich in examples of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture and art, and possesses 12 churches and 25 synagogues. The memory of the Apostle Paul is apparently still honored by the inhabitants. Several mission organizations are active in planting and/or supporting churches in Thessaloniki.

Pray 2 Thessalonians 3:16 for yourself and others who need His peace.

Extra Lesson: The Rest of the Story

Revelation 19-22

This is the rest of the story to what we have covered in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Trying to understand all the prophecies about the end times is like having a bunch of puzzle pieces that look similar but without the picture on the box top to tell you how to arrange them. All we know for sure are the border pieces. We can put the 4 sides of the puzzle together. Those are events we know will definitely happen. Those 4 sides are (1) Jesus' appearing for the Rapture of believers, (2) the Great Tribulation that follows, (3) the revealing of the Antichrist during the Tribulation, and (4) Christ coming to exact justice against unbelievers and setting up His kingdom on earth. We don't know when or how the rest of the pieces fit inside the border. But God gives us a glimpse of what it will be like after He puts those inside puzzle pieces together.

DAY ONE STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

Scriptural Insight: The climactic theme of both the Old Testament and the New Testament is the promise of the coming of the Messiah to set things right.

1. Read Acts 3:19-21. What did Peter assure believers about the future?

From the Greek: The Greek word translated "restore" or restoration" in Acts 3:21 comes from *apo* (back, again) and *kathistemi* (to set in order). It is used of the restoration of estates to rightful owners. (*Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 530)

2. Read 2 Peter 3:1-13.

Scriptural Insight: "The day of the Lord" refers to a future time in which God will be more directly and dramatically involved in world affairs than He has been since the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. That day begins immediately after the Rapture of the church, includes the Lord's judgment against sin (Revelation 6-18), and ends with the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20). In the New Testament, the phrase "the last days" for Christians refers to that time period between Christ's ascension and His appearing to gather His own (at the Rapture).

- In vv. 3-9, what attitudes will characterize the last days, particularly that of the scoffers?

- How have you seen this prophecy fulfilled in the past 100 years?
- In vv. 10-13, what information is given about the future?

3. Why will God recreate (or renew, as some translations say) the current heavens ("space," which we call the universe) and earth? See also Romans 8:19-22.

Focus on the Meaning: Scholars disagree on whether the earth and heavens are totally recreated in perfect newness or just purged of all sin and corruption so that they are new again (renewed). Since this is in the mind and hands of God, we don't need to speculate about what He does. We can look at the purpose and result as part of our glorious future. And we can praise Him for the promise of life in a world that is totally free of sin and its corruption.

4. **Gain perspective:** Considering all that you have learned in this study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, why should the study of prophecy regarding God's future plans for the earth NOT cause you fear but give you hope instead?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

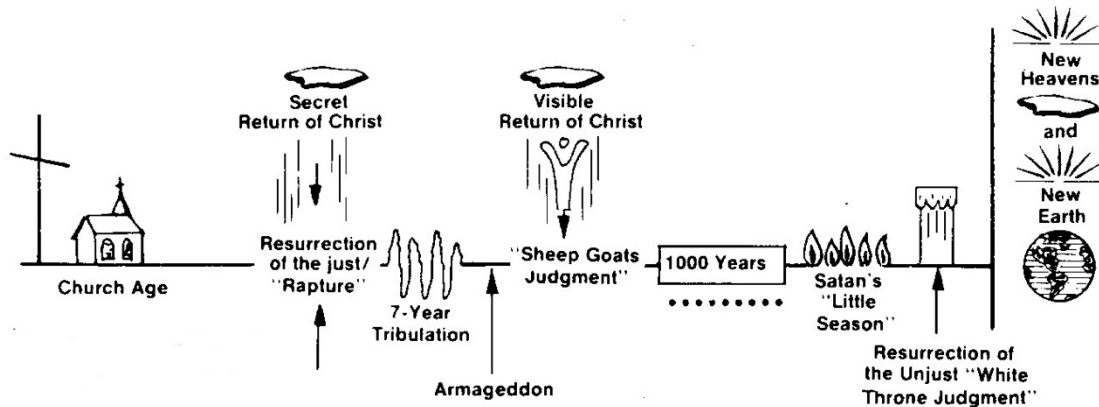
DAY TWO STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but **the things revealed belong to us** and to our children forever ... (Deuteronomy 29:29)*

Let's consider a possible timetable for the end. No one knows for sure what will happen and when. But we can make our best guesses based on what is revealed in the Bible. So, the visual below (source unknown) is a best guess.



As Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, believers (living and those who have already died) will be "raptured" or "caught up" to meet Christ in the air when the time comes that God has predetermined. Then all believers will go to heaven to be with Christ in new glorified, heavenly bodies. Based on what we learned in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, a time of Great Tribulation will follow the Rapture of believers. The books of Daniel and Revelation also describe this 7-year period of tribulation as a time of extreme deception, wars, and suffering.

At the end of the 7-year period, Christ will gloriously return to earth as He promised (Revelation 19), setting up His kingdom on earth. Revelation 20 says this kingdom will last 1000 years. A thousand years is called a millennium. So His kingdom is called the Millennial Kingdom. Those believers who died during the Tribulation period will be given resurrection bodies and, along with the raptured believers, will rule with Christ on the earth in their glorified bodies.

Those earthly humans who trusted in Christ during the Tribulation and are still alive will live on past the battle of Armageddon described in Revelation chapter 19. They will remain on Earth to enter the millennial kingdom in their natural, mortal bodies. These are the ones who will produce children during the millennial kingdom, not those in glorified bodies (Mark 12:24-25).

5. Read Revelation 19:11-21. This describes Jesus' triumphant victory over Satan and his cohorts at the end of the Tribulation. This is the Second Coming referenced in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; and Luke 21:27.

6. When Jesus returns to Earth, He will bring His kingdom with Him. Read the following verses. What information is given about Christ's reign as king on earth?

- Revelation 20:1-6—

- Isaiah 9:6-7—

Scriptural Insight: Jesus gave us the model of prayer we call “The Lord’s Prayer” in Matthew 6:9-13. In it, we find this statement, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” As we pray this, we are submitting ourselves to God’s will now to do what He desires for us as individuals to do. But the ultimate answer to this prayer is when Jesus sets up His kingdom on earth.

7. All of creation was affected by sin entering the world through Adam and Eve.

- Read Genesis 1:29-31—this is *Paradise* at the beginning.
- Read Genesis 3:17-19; 9:1-3; and Romans 8:19-22—this is *Paradise Lost*.

8. Now read the following verses that give a glimpse of *Paradise Regained* in the future. What is being restored during the millennial reign of Christ as described in Isaiah?

- Isaiah 11:1-10—

- Isaiah 65:20-25—

Scriptural Insight: Often in the Old Testament, references to the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ are found in the same paragraph, sometimes in the same verse. Only when we are able to separate out what happened at His first coming can we see what is still ahead for us at His second coming.

9. All of the nations were affected by the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel. We have seen how God restored a oneness to believers representing all nations at Pentecost through the indwelling Holy Spirit who makes all believers part of one Body—the Body of Christ. Read the following verses to see what God will restore to all people in the future millennial reign.

- Zephaniah 3:9—

- Zechariah 14:9—

- Revelation 5:6-10—

Think About It: Nations will still form, including Israel. It is a big planet. God is a God of order. Every language will have “Jesus” only as God. The nations will be one again in spirit and cooperation—united in serving God.

10. Read Revelation 20:7-15. Jesus has all authority over heaven and earth right now. He will one day exercise that authority when He physically rules as king on planet Earth. Evil will no longer have free reign on earth. But mortal human life will continue. What happens at the end of the 1000 years according to verses 7-10?

Focus on the Meaning: Mortal humans will still have the freedom of choice that God originally gave Adam and Eve. That means they will still have the sin nature, what the Bible calls the flesh. Since Satan and his demons are bound up for the whole 1000 years, they cannot deceive anyone. If anyone chooses to rebel against the king, it's because of his/her own lusts. No one can blame the world or the devil. And justice will be swift. But after Satan is released, those with rebellious hearts will join him.

Even with the perfect, righteous King Jesus ruling all of the earth, visible to everyone, mortal humans will choose to rebel against Him. Does that surprise you or not?

What application will you make to gain perspective?

11. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 6:10 that we should pray for His kingdom to come and God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. That will happen and you, dear Christian, will be in your glorified body back on earth, doing whatever work Jesus gives to you. From everything you have learned in this day's study, picture daily life in your community under Jesus' reign compared to what it is today. It's okay to take what is revealed in the Scriptures about the Kingdom and consider what it might be like to live there daily. What might be the same? What might be different?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does it mean?

From Revelation 20, we learn that Satan will be bound for 1000 years as Christ reigns on the earth. Worship will center in Jerusalem. There will be worldwide peace between people and even among animals. Earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. But not all will believe in Christ even then because the sin nature has not been removed from mortal humans born during this time. At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be freed and will lead unbelievers against Christ. But Christ will defeat Satan and his followers permanently. God will also do something to heaven and earth so they are both restored to newness. We are confident there is a heaven wherever God is—both now and in the future.

12. Read Revelation 21:1-8. Have you ever wanted to throw out all your clothes and go shopping, and get everything new? Well, God does just that.

- What does God declare in v. 5?
- From vv. 1-4, write down all that is declared in these four verses.

Looking at v. 1, some think the word “seas” is referring to inland seas between land areas like the Mediterranean Sea, not the oceans in total. This might also refer to the land areas brought together into one continent again as it was at creation.

Scriptural Insight: There is a glorious future awaiting the redeemed. The current earth and heavens (universe) will be “delivered from the bondage of corruption into ... glorious liberty” (Romans 8:21). God will make them all new again, with all the scars of sin and death burned away by His refining fires. The explicit references in the Bible to these “renewed” heavens and earth assure us that they will be so wonderful that this present earth and its heavens will soon be altogether forgotten. Not only will no sin be present there, neither will the results of sin and the curse. It is this new earth (that is, the earth made new) which will then continue forever. This is where you as a believer will spend eternity.

13. Read Revelation 21:9-27. What are some of the characteristics of the New Jerusalem?

- Vv. 9-21—

- Vv. 22-27—

Scriptural Insight: From Revelation 21:23 and 22:5, we are told that God’s light will be enough to give light to the New Jerusalem (all 1400 cubic miles of it). This is similar to what He did at the beginning of creation in Genesis 1:3.

14. Read Revelation 22:1-21. Reference is made to the Tree of Life in this chapter.

Scriptural Insight: Both the "tree of life" in Eden, and the "tree of life" in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:2, 14, 19), are presented as literal trees. (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on Revelation 2020 Edition*, p. 48)

- What will be flowing from the throne of God (vv. 1-2)? See also Joel 3:18 for a description of the flowing water and Genesis 2:10 regarding Eden.
- In Revelation 22:2-3, 14, and 19, what new information is given about the Tree of Life?
- How does this information help you understand the role of the Tree of Life in Eden (Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24)?

From the Greek: The Greek word translated “healing” or “therapy” (*therapeian*) is similar to a word translated elsewhere as “household” (Matthew 24:45; Luke 12:42). In such cases, “therapy” refers to a staff of servants employed in keeping the affairs of a great house running efficiently. Therapy could mean effective service of the nations (verse 3) that include all the believers since Creation from all over the earth. It could also be translated as “health-giving.” Since there is no sickness in heaven, the tree’s fruit and leaves could also contribute to the physical or emotional well-being of everyone.

What application will you make to gain perspective?

15. Imagine what it will be like for you to live there in the city with God as well as going forth from the city to places on the new earth. God gives us the description so it is okay. In fact, He wants us to think about that glorious place which will be our future home! Feel free to use any creative means (poem, song, drawing, prayer) to express your gratitude and joy. **"Everything old is new again"—restoration complete! Praise God for His future plans for you!**

16. ***Deeper Discoveries (optional)***: Read Randy Alcorn's book *Heaven* or any other good resource on what life will be like in the new heavens and earth.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "Heaven on Earth" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page. Podcasts may be found at melanienewton.com/podcasts (choose "13: Perspective".)

Podcast Listener Guide

Heaven on Earth

The LORD reigns! Let the earth be happy! Let the many coastlands rejoice! (Psalm 97:1)

On earth, the Rapture of the believers is a signal that the time of the Gentiles has ended. The Great Tribulation begins. Most of the book of Revelation describes what happens then. Many Jews will believe during the Tribulation as well as some Gentiles. Revelation chapter 19 describes what will happen at the end of the 7 years of Tribulation. Jesus will return to earth. He'll fight the enemies on earth, defeat them, and set up His kingdom prophesied so much in both the Old and New Testaments.

THE KINGDOM BEGINS ON EARTH

- Based upon an understanding of Scripture, when Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom (Revelation 20), He will be bringing His people with Him. We will be coming with Him for the battle where He defeats the Antichrist and all who are fighting with Him against God. Victory is assured. Jesus will win!
- King Jesus will be king over all. Jerusalem will be His capital. Nations will still form, including Israel. Revelation 20 says this kingdom will last 1000 years. A thousand years is called a millenium. So His kingdom is called the Millenial Kingdom. Isaiah is filled with descriptions of the Millenial Kingdom, especially chapters 11 and 65. Every Christian who had died on earth or been raptured will be returning with Jesus and will be staying on to serve Him in His Kingdom.
- Those earthly humans who trusted in Christ during the Tribulation will live on past the battle of Armageddon described in Revelation chapter 19. They will be mortal humans dealing with the whole change of rulers. All the new rulers will always do the right thing.

KING JESUS WILL REIGN OVER A PARTIALLY RESTORED EARTH.

- King Jesus will reign over an earth that is partially restored to its original created state.
 - ◆ Isaiah tells us that animals will revert back to being vegetarian. Animals and people will not fear one another so there will be no fierce, violent, and dangerous creatures.
 - ◆ Future millenniums will marry and have babies. They will live to be well over 100 years again. Never will a baby or child die. Only the wicked will die early.
 - ◆ People will build houses, plant crops, and eat well. They will work and enjoy the benefits. Work will be a pleasure.
 - ◆ Needs will be addressed immediately because God says in Isaiah 65:24, *“Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”*
 - ◆ There is no reason to think there won't be cars, planes, computers, roads, buildings, gardens, and places to decorate and make beautiful.
 - ◆ Worship will be awesome and focus on Jesus in Jerusalem. Technology could make that possible across the planet. That worship will include resurrected humans and mortal humans.
 - ◆ All will call on Jesus' name together meaning there's probably one language again. Hooray!

- ♦ King Jesus will reign over us in our new bodies, also. Our bodies were designed by God for life on this earth. Not to live in heaven, but to live on this earth. Isn't that interesting?

Resurrected saints will serve in the role of priests of God. Perhaps we will be the ones teaching the mortal humans all about God and how to live dependently on Him. We will also be reigning with Him, whatever that requires. *Revelation 20:6*

- Although believers are encouraged to individually live in peace with each other and with unbelievers, we humans can never bring about world peace.

THE MORTAL HUMANS WILL STILL HAVE FREEDOM OF CHOICE.

- The Future Millenials who are mortal humans will still have the freedom of choice that God originally gave Adam and Eve. What does human freedom look like in an environment where the Healer will be healing and extending life way beyond our experience now?
- As mortal humans, the Future Millenials will still have the sin nature. If anyone chooses to rebel against the king, it's because of his/her own lusts. No one can blame the world with Jesus on the throne or the devil because he and his cohorts will be bound.
- At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be released. He'll instigate a rebellion among non-believing mortals and finally be defeated. Doesn't it baffle you that anyone living under Jesus' perfect rule in an almost perfect world would rebel against Him? That's how strong the sin nature is.

LIFE FOREVER ON A NEW EARTH—FULLY RESTORED CREATION

- After that time, God's heaven comes to a newly restored earth. The scripture calls God's new dwelling place the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22). It will be absolutely beautiful.
- But there's a lot of living to come between now and then as we move around here, then move out to our new bodies, and move back to planet Earth with our King Jesus. Heaven on earth.
- When it comes to heaven, we probably have a lot more questions than answers at this time. But one thing we can know for sure. If we are living life today as though Jesus were our King ruling on earth, living dependently on Him each day, considering His presence and His will throughout the day (not just in the morning or evening), we will be a whole lot closer to understanding what real Kingdom living is all about.
- For us, the hope of heaven should transform our perspective on death. We also shouldn't long to escape this life. The point is not to escape from earth and find oneself at last in heaven, but to let God's 'heavenly' life change our earthly reality.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with His perspective on life in the present and in the future. Then, live securely in Him during this time of waiting.

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Parts of this study have been deleted (author information, podcast listening guides and preview lesson) and bible verses edited to the NKJV by Growing in Grace Women's Ministry of Calvary Chapel Chino Hills.

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