

# BOOK-A-MONTH CLUB

~ January ~

## 1 Thessalonians with David Willy

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### Background to the book of 1 Thessalonians

*Author:* Paul

*Date:* Around 51 A.D.

*Setting:* Paul is writing from Corinth, to the Church in Thessalonica, which is in Northern Greece. The church is a young church that Paul established on his second missionary journey, see Acts 17. He established the church around 50-51 AD, but had to leave quickly because of the dangers they faced through persecution.

Paul wrote because he was concerned about how the young church was holding up during persecution, which threatened many of their lives and he wanted to encourage the young believers. He also wanted to answer some questions that they had concerning the second coming of Christ.

As you study this letter from Paul, think about the practical advice given for Christians to follow in their lives. The questions that are provided are to help us dig into the Word and see how it applies to us all. Under each question I provided additional discussion points and scripture references that also apply. I did not provide the answer for the questions, just some thoughts for you to consider and study while you ponder your answers to the questions.

### 1 Thessalonians Chapter 1

Main Theme: Faith of the Thessalonians

1. What 3 things did Paul commend the Thessalonians for in vs. 3?

Paul is referencing their actions. What they were doing made him thankful and proud. I think that this needs to be a reminder to Christians that just believing is not where we need to be in our walk with God. Our belief and our hope in Jesus Christ should drive us to serve and to love others. What does James 2:19-20 remind us? This is not to say that we do good works to get salvation. However we should be doing good works because we have salvation. The 3 things that Paul references here in vs. 3 are characteristics that should be seen in all believers.

2. What 2 things helped the Thessalonians have assurance in the words that they received from Paul and his fellow workers (vs. 5)?

As we study together throughout this year, pray that God will send the Holy Spirit to give you assurance and wisdom concerning the words we receive.

What we have to ask ourselves is "Am I confirming what I say I believe or am I contradicting it with the way I act or the things I say?" Paul, Timothy, and Silas lived in a manner that confirmed what they believed about Jesus, and it resulted in more people becoming believers.

3. What happened to the new believers after accepting the word (vs. 6)?

I think it is a good time to thank God that we live in a country where we can practice our faith without the mass persecution that early Christians faced. The believers at Thessalonica, were facing beatings and different forms of execution regularly.

4. Who did Paul say the Thessalonians had become an example to concerning their new faith (vs. 7)?

Remember these are new Christians and they have become examples to an entire region, so much so that people are talking about them and telling of what they are doing because of and for Jesus. The vast majority of us encounter people on a daily basis. Some of us many more people than others, but I think it is appropriate for us to ask ourselves, "What kind of example am I being to those that I encounter on a daily basis?" We are all examples, the question is: "Am I a positive example for Jesus Christ, or a negative one?" Do my actions cause people to want to turn to God, or turn away from God?

5. What are the Thessalonians waiting for or looking forward to in vs. 10?

We will have struggles in life. There will be ups and downs. However, through it all we need to find hope in Jesus. He has rescued us. I believe the word rescue is a beautiful word choice. Jesus Christ, when all seems lost, will rescue us.

## 1 Thessalonians Chapter 2

Main Theme: Paul remembers his visit, and sets example of how to conduct ourselves. This story of the first visit to Thessalonica is told in Acts 17:1-8

1. Where had Paul been before he came to Thessalonica? What happened to him there(vs. 2)?

I encourage you to read Acts 16:9-40 to see the whole story of what happened to Paul before he came to Thessalonica. It will more than likely be a familiar story, but a good story to reread.

2. Although Paul faced much opposition and even threats on his life, what did he continue to do (vs. 2)

Do you ever choose not to invite someone to church or tell someone about Jesus out of fear? I know sometimes I feel like I don't want to offend someone or I think "what if they think I am crazy"? Paul's life was on the line and he still boldly shared the Good News of Jesus. Next time we have someone in our lives that we feel God wants us to invite them to church or share our faith with them, I think we need to remember this.

3. When Paul and his fellow workers shared their faith with the Thessalonians, what things did they avoid while presenting the gospel and what good characteristics did they follow when sharing their faith?(vs. 4-11)

Look at the things that Paul did to present the gospel and did not do while presenting the gospel. This is a good list to consider when sharing our faith with others. To effectively share our faith with others, we need to be sincere and pure at heart. Our actions should never cause someone to doubt who Jesus is since we are sharing Jesus through our actions and words.

4. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to live what kind of lives(vs. 12)?

Praise God that we have been "CALLED" into God's Kingdom. And considering that God has called us into his Kingdom we need to ask ourselves, "Is the way I am living considered worthy by God?" Also a good reminder would be that not only should you live a life that would be considered worthy by God, but are you, like Paul, encouraging others live that same way?

5. What does the Word of God do for those that believe (vs. 13)?

What areas do you need the Word of God to work in your life? Do you need peace about something you are going through or strength to make it through a certain hardship or strength to overcome a temptation that you are faced with? Read the scriptures, Pray the scriptures, and let the very Word of God work in your life and transform you.

6. Who had prevented Paul and the others from returning to the Thessalonians (vs. 18)?

This is a good reminder that Satan is at work trying to counteract any good that we might try to do in the name of Jesus. What does 1 Peter 5:8 compare the devil to? However there is good news! What does James 4:7 tell us?

7. What does Paul call the Thessalonians (vs. 19-20)?

Think back to the person or people who played a major role in your faith in Jesus Christ? You are that person's spiritual pride and joy. The good works you do for Jesus is a reward to them as well. The people you have helped or will help lead to Jesus are your pride and joy when their faith grows. Praise God for the joy that we will have as we stand before Jesus Christ all together when He returns.

## I Thessalonians Chapter 3

Main Theme: Danger of temptation, and the joy our faithfulness brings to other believers.

1. Why did Paul send Timothy back to Thessalonica (vs 2-3)?

2. What was Paul afraid might have happened to them (vs 5)?

What temptations are you facing that could threaten your faith? As early Jewish converts were tempted to go back to their Jewish traditions and practices, the gentile converts at Thessalonica were also tempted to go back to their pagan practices and faiths because of the severe persecution they faced for becoming a Christian. We likely aren't facing the same thing, however the temptations we are facing threaten our faith the same.

3. What Good news did Timothy return with (vs. 6)?

Think back on this last year. Has there been enough growth in your faith and in your loving actions that it can be presented as good news to other believers? Whatever your answer is, take a moment now to commit this year to God and His good works in faith and love. Ask God to place brothers and sisters of accountability in your life that will encourage your growth over the year.

4. How did this news affect Paul in spite of his sufferings (vs 7-8)?

It is important to remember that how we handle the hard times that we go through has an impact on others. Believers can be uplifted and strengthened to see how we endure with faith during struggles. The lost world also sees how we respond to certain situations will start to wonder why we respond differently than most the world.

5. What did Paul pray for night and day (vs 10)?

Think of the young Christians that you know, maybe someone who has recently accepted Christ and was baptized. It is important for us to strengthen and support them to help them become stronger in their faith. I would like to encourage you to select someone who is a new Christian and pray for their continued growth in the Lord. Send them a word of encouragement when you think of them.

6. What does Paul pray that the Lord will do for the Thessalonians (vs. 12)?

Go back and read what Paul is proud of concerning the Thessalonians in Chapter 1 verse 3. Paul is proud of their loving actions. But here in verse 12, Paul is praying that the Lord will cause their love to "increase and abound" for each other and for all people. This is a reminder that we need to always grow. It is so easy for us as Christians to reach a plateau in our faith and our loving actions towards others. We can get to a place where we feel like we are doing pretty good and working hard, but there is always more room for growth when it concerns sharing the love of Christ with others.

7. What result will come out of our growing in love towards others (vs. 13)?

Thank God that we can be considered blameless before God because of Jesus Christ.

## I Thessalonians Chapter 4

Main Themes: How the actions our faith should continue to grow. Understanding of what will happen when Christ returns concerning those who have already gone before us

### 1. What does Paul urge the believers to do more and more of?

The Thessalonians are already leading a life that is pleasing to God and Paul wants them to continue to do that in every way that they can.

### 2. What does God want us to do and how should that be followed in our lives (vs 3-7)?

I am sure many people would just assume we skim right over the verses concerning sexual immorality and lust and move right into the next passage. However, I believe this is an area that Satan has too much power for us to just move on. I think one of the problems is that so much shame is attached to sexual sins and the church many times throughout history has made outcasts of those who commit sexual sins. Nobody is willing to open up and share that they struggle with these sins. I believe this gives Satan an open door to step in and tear down the church one life at a time and one family at a time.

If you don't struggle with the temptation for sexual sins, thank God for it, and ask that he will continue to give you strength in this area. Also pray for the brothers and sisters who do struggle with these sins. Pray for the individuals and families who have been devastated by it. Most of us probably know someone whose life has been turned upside down by either their own struggle with sexual immorality, or who's life was turned upside down by a family members sexual immorality. Too many people are hurting on both sides of this issue for us to skip over it just because the discussion of sexual things is just a little embarrassing for most.

If you do struggle with any form of sexual immorality, whether it be uncontrolled lust, homosexuality, addiction to pornography, adulterous actions, know that you are not alone in your struggle. There are others who struggle with the same sins you do, but remember what 1 Corinthians 10:13 says. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

Paul reminds us in the verses here in Thessalonians that our sexual desires and practices must be placed under the control of Christ. Today is a new day because of Christ Jesus. Turn to God and ask him to help you overcome your weaknesses.

### 3. Why doesn't Paul need to write to the Thessalonians concerning brotherly Christian Love (vs 9)?

Read what 1 John 3:11-18 and 1 John 4:7-21 says about loving our brothers and sisters. God showed us love first through Jesus Christ and we are commanded to love others.

### 4. What 3 things should be our ambition and why are these things important (vs. 11-12)?

Our actions have an impact on how non-Christians view Jesus. It is important that we work hard and let our actions point people to faith in Christ.

### 5. List the order of events that will occur when Jesus returns (vs 16-17)

Paul writes this set of verses to explain to the believers what was going to happen to the believers who have already died. Many early Christians expected Jesus was going to return during their life, so they started having questions when some believers died before Jesus returned.

It is easy to want to hang on to this world, but Paul writes these verses so will have hope in the 2nd coming of Christ. Read Revelation 22:20. You can hear the excitement in John's voice after Jesus says "I am coming soon." AMEN! SO BE IT! LET IT HAPPEN NOW! COME LORD JESUS!

### 6. What should we do now that we have an understanding of these events (vs. 18)?

It is important that we share this knowledge with others (both believers and non-believers) so they can be encouraged and warned of the second coming of Christ.

## 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5

Main Themes: Warning to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. Paul's final instructions to the Thessalonians concerning our Christian responsibilities

1. What does Paul compare the coming of the Lord to (vs. 2-3)?

Now would be a good time to flip over to Matthew 24 and read what Jesus tells his disciples concerning his second coming. The entire chapter is discussing events of the future. Verses 36-50 is Jesus' warning to be prepared. Now we can debate the end times and the return of Jesus until Jesus comes back. Regardless of how you interpret different scriptures concerning Christ's return, there is one thing that is very clear. Jesus will return and when he does many people will not be ready. Paul here in Thessalonians, along with the words of Jesus from Matthew, reminds us that we need to be ready. What things do you need to put away from yourself to help you prepare for the second coming of Jesus? What things are you doing already, but you just need to increase that action more and more

2. Why will the second coming of the Lord not catch Christians off guard (vs. 4-5)?

Look to 1 John 1:5-7 as a reference for living in the light.

3. What is our instruction from Paul (vs 6)?

We must stay alert and be prepared. Verse three of this chapter tells us there will be no escape from the destruction for those who are not prepared.

4. What are we supposed to put on (vs. 8)?

There is a spiritual battle going on, and we need to prepare for it. For more on Christian armor read Ephesians 6: 13-17.

5. What did God decide and how did he accomplish it (vs 9-10)?

It is comforting to know that God chose us and that he sent Jesus Christ to save us from his anger.

6. What should our response be to this news (vs. 11)?

As Paul nears the end of his life in 2 Timothy 4:7 Paul says he finished the race. A long race is exhausting. As the runner gets near the end of the race, it does them well to hear encouraging words from others so they can persevere to the end. In Ephesians 4:29 Paul instructs believers to only use words that will edify, or build up, our fellow brothers and sisters.

7. What does Paul instruct believers in how they should treat Church leaders (vs. 12-13)?

Think of some ways that you can honor your ministers, elders, deacons, and ministry leaders. They work so hard for our church family and we need to share our appreciation of their hard work and show them how much we love and respect them.

8. What are we to do concerning the people around us (vs. 14-15)?

This list of instructions is for all believers. These are things that we often like to think of as jobs of ministers, but Paul encouraged everyone to take an active role in serving the needs of others.

9. What 3 things does Paul instruct those who belong in Jesus Christ (vs. 16-18)?

Notice that these things should never cease. Our situation in life should not change these things. We should always be joyful, prayerful, and thankful in both the good times and bad. Remember the Thessalonians are going through harsh persecution and Paul tells them these things need to remain constant even in the hard times.

10. What is Paul referencing concerning the Holy Spirit (vs 19-22)?

1 Corinthians Chapter 12 is a more in depth look at the gifts of the Holy spirit. We have all been given a gift. We need to use them to bring glory to God. It is wrong to quench the spirit and not use the gifts we have been given.

11. What does Paul pray on behalf of the Thessalonians (vs. 23)?

We are being sanctified through Jesus Christ. The question we need to keep asking ourselves is "Do my actions reflect the actions of a believer who is being made pure and blameless before God?"

12. How do we know that this sanctification will happen (vs. 24)?

God is faithful and we should be thankful for it. If God promises us something will be done we can be certain it will happen. Paul tells Titus that God cannot lie. It is not in His nature. Hang on to the promises of God and hope in the return of Jesus Christ since he is the one who makes us holy.

13. How does the “holy kiss” apply to us today (vs. 26)?

Many people just move past this verse and say, that was a customary practice in their culture and it doesn't apply to us. However I still think there are implications for us to follow. The New Living Translation of this verse states “Greet all the brothers and sisters in Christian Love”. God wants us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, and he wants that love to be shown.

14. Why did Paul want the letter read to all brothers and sisters (vs. 27)?

The church needed strength and encouragement. We also need strength and encouragement, it just might be for different circumstances.

I pray that this study of 1 Thessalonians has strengthened you and encouraged our church. We must continue to strive for the goal as Paul talks about in Philippians Chapter 3. No matter what we face, praise God that we have Hope in Jesus Christ!