

A SERIES IN 1 THESSALONIANS



LEADERS NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was produced mainly using the commentary on
1 and 2 Thessalonians by Gene L. Green.

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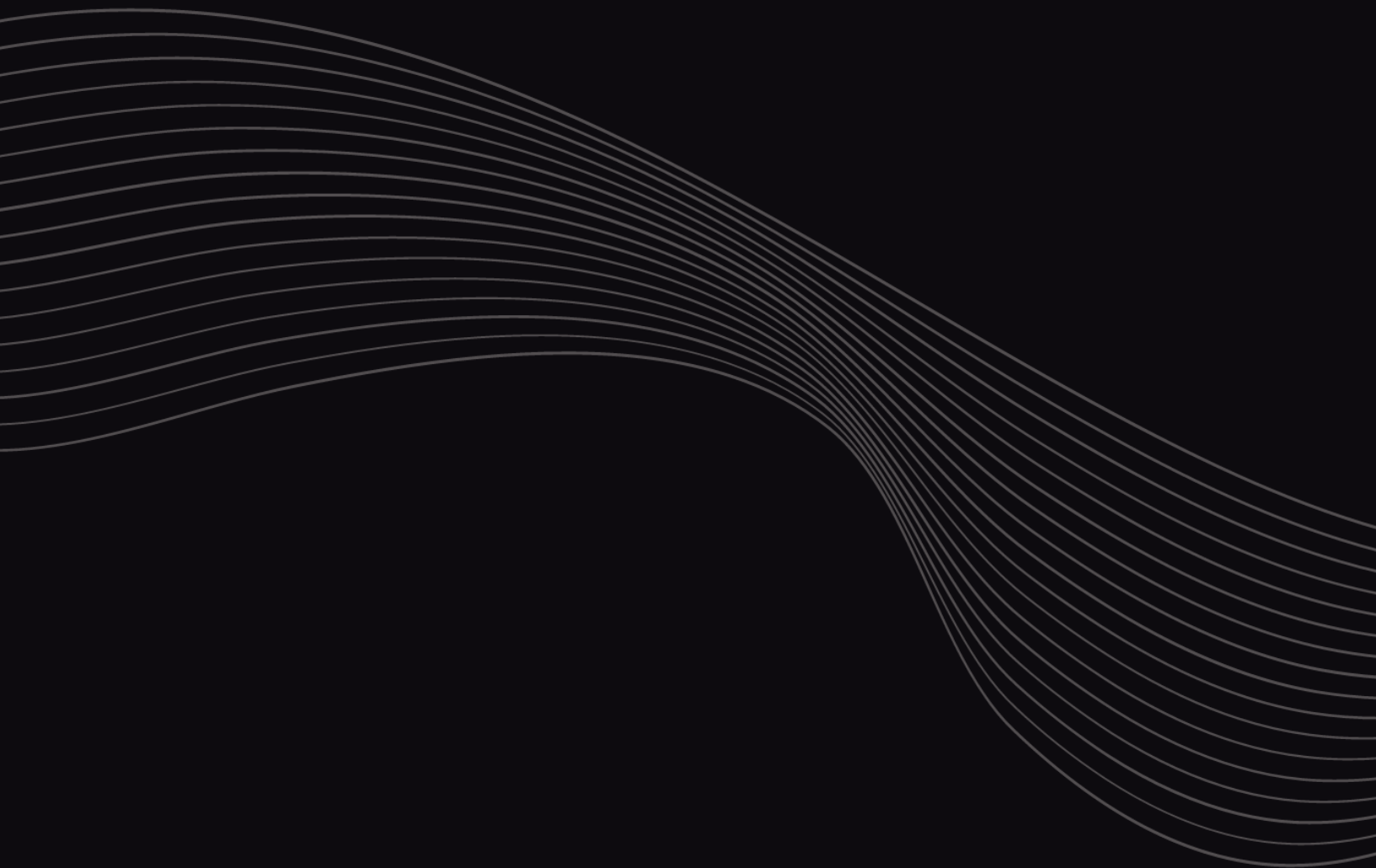
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“Grace and peace to you”

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1A



STUDY ONE

Overflow of Courage

Passages:

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Acts 17:1-15

BACKGROUND

Read Acts 16:9 and 17:1-9.

Thessalonica was founded in 316BC by Cassander, king of Macedonia, by the joining together of 26 villages. This city was established as a port city because of its good location. It offered deep anchorage and shelter from winds. It gave excellent access via the Mediterranean to the islands and the cities of the Aegean Sea and beyond to the great ports in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt.

This city was a wealthy city also. It drew economic strength from its port and also its agriculture. The land surrounding this city was fertile and good for agriculture. Thessalonica was also an important city for the Roman empire as well because of its port and its location on the Via Egnatia, an important road in the empire.

This city was a hub in the empire that would become the centre of the Christian mission in Macedonia.

Paul would only spend a few weeks in this city but they responded to the gospel in amazing ways. In Acts 17:2 we are told that Paul preached on 3 Sabbath days indicating that they were there for three or four weeks. However, the persecution came thick and fast.

INTRODUCE THE ISSUE

These letters help us to focus on how we should live in the light of what Jesus has done and his imminent second coming. This is all under persecution as we read in Acts 17:1-9, we need to stand firm.

QUESTIONS

1. In Acts 16:6-7 the apostle Paul and his companions had plans to preach in the province of Asia. Paul has a vision but who decided whether they should go?

It is good to see that it is not just Paul telling people what to do but they seem to test the vision. They concluded that God called THEM to preach in Macedonia. There is no doubt Paul would have had some influence but these things do not seem to happen on a whim but collaborative consideration. Later on in Paul's letters such 2 Corinthians we hear about the Macedonians and their generosity etc. God was working out his purposes for the spread of the gospel and its enduring witness. Perhaps you could ask whether people have experienced a time when they feel someone had a word from the Lord or a dream and tested it by asking others wisdom.

2. Given the opposition Paul and his companions faced in Thessalonica, did they make the right decision to go there? Why or why not (try to put yourself in their shoes)?

There was opposition in Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:13-16) so it would appear that they had made the wrong decision or did they? Perhaps you could ask, do we base our decisions on whether things are good or bad? What are other things can indicate we are doing what God has asked us to do? What things are happening in Acts 17:1-9 to indicate God was with them?

3. What was the cause of the opposition?

The answer is in verse 5. You need to take this further. Ask why you think they were jealous? What in the passage indicates this? Are there times when you feel jealous that can cause you to think ill of other believers? Why do we feel jealous?

4. In Acts 17:6-9 what do we learn about the believers in Thessalonica?

We learn they are hospitable as Paul and Silas stayed with Jason. This was obviously known to people because they knew where to look. They accepted the message that Paul brought because they 'welcomed' them into their house. The gospel had influenced them. They recognised Jesus as king. Perhaps you can ask why this is important?

5. In Acts 17:7 we see the accusation against the believers and it is a half truth. In what ways is the Christian message discredited in half truths?

It is a half truth because we see from the letter what Paul had been teaching them. Perhaps we hear that Jesus is a good teacher of morals. Jesus expects you to give up who you are. Jesus is Saviour but not really king. Perhaps you could ask why is it not enough to know Jesus as Saviour but not Lord?

THINK IT THROUGH

In Acts 17:3 we are told that Paul and his companions were explaining to them, from the Scriptures, that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. Where in the Old Testament would you go to explain this? Why is it important to know?

Genesis 22:1-19, Exodus 12, Leviticus 1-4, 2 Samuel 7:1-17, Isaiah 53, Daniel 7, Psalm 22, Ezekiel 37, Jonah 1:17. There are many more trajectories that could be drawn from different stories and not just random verses. The whole sacrificial system, Ezekiel 47 with regard to the resurrection. The real question is are we able to prove Jesus from the OT and how?

MAKING IT STICK


How do we respond to accusations about our beliefs?

How could we do this better?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- John Gray as he leads our church.
- Our wardens, that God will grant them wisdom as they steward our finances and property.
- Rod and Abby Bishop in their roles at ECM (European Christian Mission)
- That growth in our Christian walk will be impacted by the majesty and holiness of a God who is bigger than we imagine yet mindful of us so that we are known by him.



“We always thank God for all of you,
mentioning you in our prayers.
We continually remember before our
God and Father your work produced
by faith, your labour prompted by love,
and your endurance inspired by hope in
our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-3

STUDY TWO

Overflow of Faith, Hope and Love

Passage:

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

QUESTIONS

1. In Verse 2 and 3 Paul begins talking about praying for Thessalonian Christians. What three things show their understanding of the gospel? What is the result of these three things?

The three things that show they understand the gospel are faith, hope and love through Jesus Christ. This produces work, labour and endurance. Perhaps you could ask what people think the difference between work and labour is? These are two different words in their original language. One means work that is done the second relating to love is literally translated labour of love.

2. How did the things that Paul remembers in his prayer come about (1:4-10)?

They heard the gospel, the power of the Holy Spirit and with conviction. Perhaps you could ask, was it the Holy Spirit convicting the hearer or the conviction of the messenger or both? Explain your answer. They turned from idols to serve the true and living God who rescues them from the coming wrath. Perhaps you could ask what is a word to describe 9b? This is called repentance, that is, turning away from one thing toward another.

3. Why is it important that they should imitate the Lord? Who do you look to for inspiration with regard to your faith?

This is how we learn to be the people we are now. What it means to have the Spirit transforming us into the likeness of Jesus. If we do not imitate those who bring the message and who imitate Jesus (imitating people who imitate Jesus is really important) how will we know if we are in Christ a new creature. We are being made into the likeness of Jesus not a better version of our sinful and broken selves.

4. How did their faith in God become known everywhere (verse 8)?

It rang out, people heard about it. It must have been extraordinary for word to get out about this change that was going on. We also know that in Acts 17:10ff that word reached Berea from Thessalonica so news travels fast.

5. What has Jesus rescued us from and how have we been rescued (verse 10)?

We have been rescued from the coming wrath. We are rescued by Jesus who raises us from the dead. Perhaps you ask what people understand by God's wrath?

THINK IT THROUGH

In verse 5 Paul mentions the “gospel” that came to them. What elements of the gospel do you see in verses 5-10? What do you think is the role of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of this gospel?

The gospel is proclaimed, it comes with power and conviction, brings both suffering and joy, brings repentance (verse 9b), resurrection and saving from wrath.

MAKING IT STICK

How do Thessalonians respond to gospel? How do we respond to the gospel?

What kind of work is produced by faith?

How is our labour prompted by love?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Pat Jones and Emma Sibley as they lead our youth ministries. Ask for wisdom, and for God to sustain them. Pray that the leaders in youth ministry will show God's love to those in their care and that many will be won for the kingdom.
- Our parish council, that God will grant them wisdom as they steward our finances and property.
- Pray that as we live holy lives in obedience to God we will do it joyfully and with gratitude, knowing that God is for us and wants what is best for us. Perhaps you could finish with Philippians 1:9-11.

“And we thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you.”

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13

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STUDY THREE

Overflow of the Gospel of Love

Passage:

1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

QUESTIONS

1. Why does Paul want to remind them of how he brought the gospel to them (1-12)?

He reminds them that were genuine about it and that they are trying to please God not people. There is also deep love for them as he uses the familial metaphors of mother and father. To remind them that they are encouraged, comforted and urged to live lives worthy of the calling they have received and that glory awaits.

2. What level of importance does Paul place on the message about Jesus (verses 2:4b-6b)? How do we know this?

Even though they faced opposition, what they do and say is approved by God himself. They do not seek the praise of fickle human beings but God himself. Sometimes speaking gospel truths to people is difficult and risky but we are seeking to be approved by God not humans. We seek God's approval because we know that he wants what is best for us. His glory is paramount, maybe even above which lives are saved. How do people feel about this last statement? Is it a step too far? If so, why? If not, why not?

3. Does sharing the gospel bring you joy or delight you (verse 8)?

Make sure you push people on this. This is part of a natural outworking of the power of the gospel changing us. Having said that it does not mean that we are natural evangelists but if we found the cure for cancer I am sure we would share that. The joy and delight is knowing that we are bringing hope to people and God is being glorified (this is what the gospel does). Jesus is the only hope of the world this in itself is a joy and delight.

4. What does it mean to share your life (verse 8)?

5. How do verses 8 and 9 help us understand verse 7 and being like a mother (perhaps refer to chapter 1 and the use of trinity)?

6. How does a fathers role differ to a mothers (verse 11-12)?

There seems to be a distinction between care and discipline. How do we people feel about this contrast?

7. Should these characteristics be found in all of us as a body of believers (1:6)?

It is a family type language. It speaks of whom it is that we belong to. We belong to God but also each other.

8. How did the Thessalonians receive the gospel that Paul brought to them (13-16)?

THINK IT THROUGH

What things are important to remember when taking the gospel to the lost?

Will the spread of the gospel bring an easy life and acceptance by everyone?

Ask people to explain their answer.

In these verses Paul is talking about opposition, about the work they did to support themselves and the fact that they shared their lives with the Thessalonians. What seems to be Paul's priority through this?

Nothing would inhibit the proclamation of the Gospel. He does not want to give them a reason not to hear it or think they have played a part in it. The boast must belong to Jesus.

MAKING IT STICK

How have you responded to the gospel that you have accepted?

What kind of opposition do you/we face to the gospel?

How should we respond to this opposition? Perhaps use a particular example.

A LITTLE DEEPER

What issues in the Thessalonian church is Paul trying to deal with?

Opposition. Word is not human but divine or maybe lack of trust and credibility. Paul was there for such a short time.

Verse 4. What does it mean to be entrusted with the gospel?

Verse 6. What is significant about Paul referring to himself, as apostle?


Verse 16. What does Paul mean by “they always heap their sins to the limit”? How has the wrath of God come upon them? There is a sense of justice. God has the last say.

There is a sense of justice. God has the last say.

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today’s passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- For Linda Stephens and Naomi Pigot as they lead our children’s ministries.
- Keith Baker as he oversees the generations ministries.
- Norm and Janelle Gorrie serving with CMS in Kenya as they strengthen believers and reach the lost.



“For now we really live, since you
are standing firm in the Lord. How
can we thank God enough for you in
return for all the joy we have in the
presence of our God because of you?”

1 THESSALONIANS 3:8–9

STUDY FOUR

Overflow of Endurance

Passage:

1 Thessalonians 2:17- 3:13

QUESTIONS

1. Why is Paul, Timothy and Silas so keen to get back to Thessalonica? (2:17, Acts 17:1-10)

2. What do you think is the significance of “Satan” stopping them from going back to Thessalonica? (2:18)

The important thing here is to conclude that even though we do not know exactly what happened to cause Paul to use this language, we can conclude that the opposition was formidable enough to put a halt to their best efforts. The Thessalonians were encouraged by Paul because of their faith and love and hope. Don't get distracted even if you cannot do the things you may want to.

3. What does Paul mean when he says that they are his “hope”?

It is a hope that their labour is not in vain. Outworking of the truth of the gospel.

4. What does Paul mean when he says these people are his crown or his glory? (v20)

“The double attributes of ‘pride’ and ‘joy’ are essentially parallel to the triad of the preceding verse (‘hope and joy and crown of boasting’) and therefore also ought to be understood in light of an eschatological and juridical context. The Thessalonian church will be evidence of the faithful fulfillment of Paul’s apostolic calling at the return of Jesus because they are already now the source of his pride and joy.”

The word glory (pride) here has the “common meaning of ‘fame recognition, renown, honour, prestige rather than the religious sense of glory.’”
From 1 Thessalonians by Jeffrey A.D. Weima page 205.

5. Why did Paul and Silas send Timothy to Thessalonica? (vv2-3)

Perhaps you could ask what the people of Thessalonica would think of Paul sending Timothy? He wants to encourage them, build them up, know they are remembered.

6. What is Paul's greatest concern regarding the Thessalonians? (v5-6)

Is this a concern we have for the people of God? How do we deal with it? "I would suggest we often deal with this by imposing moral values or rules that simply need to be obeyed, not dealing with core Gospel convictions." You can ask people to respond to this by agreeing or]disagreeing and why?

7. How does Paul know they are standing firm in the Lord? (v8)

Refer to verse 7 and 1 Thess 1:2-3.

THINK IT THROUGH

In 3: 5b, do we see a lack of faith in God on Paul's part? If not why not?

What do you think it means to for their love to increase and overflow? Who is it that makes this happen?(3:12)

God's love is lavished upon us, not so we will love him but because he has so much to share. This ought to be true for us also. The love of God is not just for us but becomes evident to others and brings about fruit from our lives as Jesus by his Spirit works in us.

MAKING IT STICK

Do you know of anyone that is your glory and your crown?

In what ways do you show your love “for each other” and for “everyone else?”

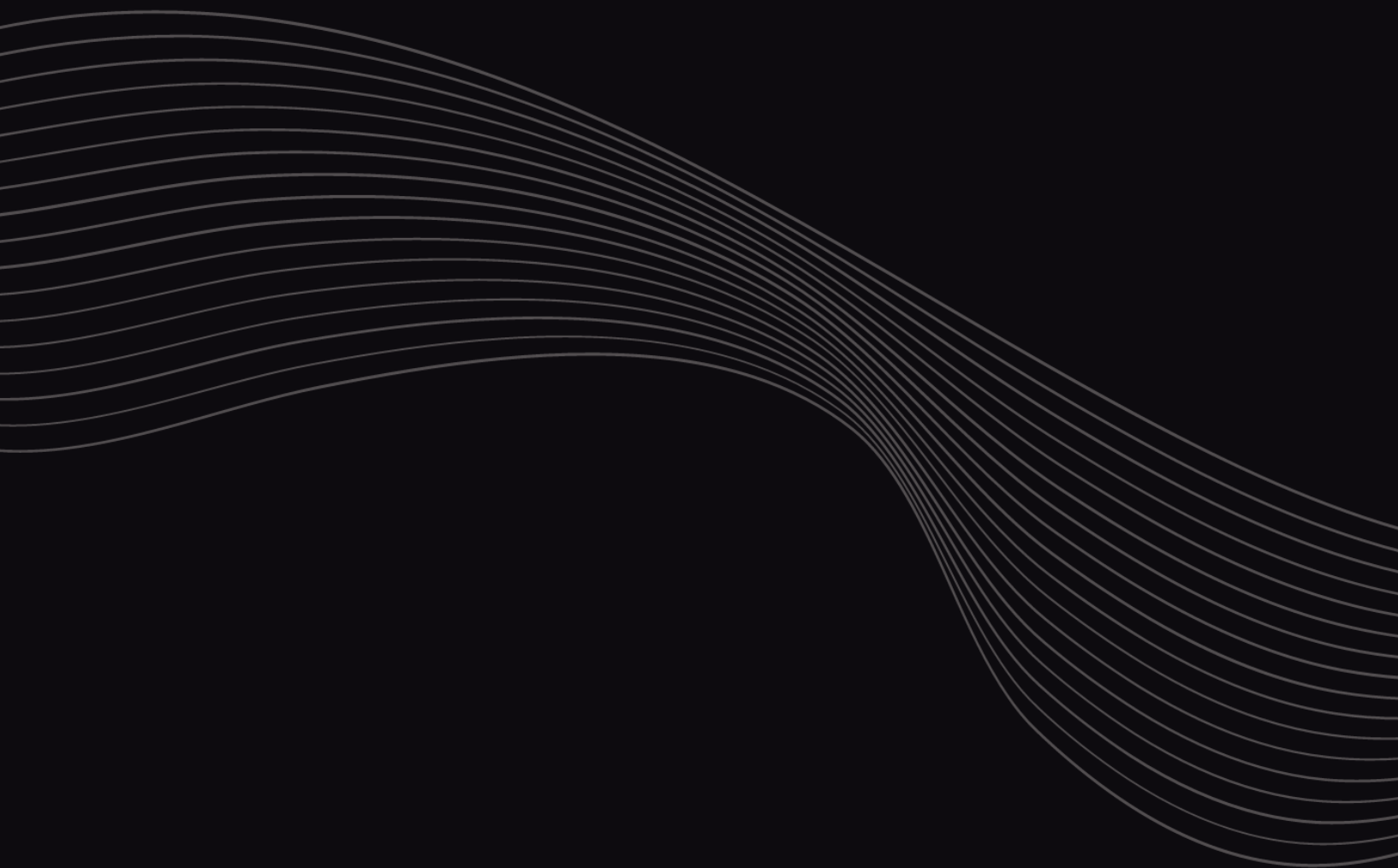
PRAYER

In addition to responding to today’s passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Care Ministry at St Paul’s and for the Care Minister Fiona Smith as she leads the teams. Please be praying for the Sunday Care Teams at each of our services, prayer ministry, practical care, Help at Home Days, and the many teams providing care and support to people across our church.
- John & Fiona (Zeke and Clay) - Pray as they prepare to head back to SE Asia

“For God did not call us to be
impure, but to live a holy life.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:7



STUDY FIVE

Overflow of Holiness

Passage:

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

QUESTIONS

1. What does Paul ask them to do “more and more?” (4:1)
2. Why does Paul want the Thessalonians to know that the instructions for moral behaviour come from Jesus not from the apostles?

It is important to see that when we become Christian we hand our lives over to Jesus, it is him that represents us before God as we represent him before others. We submit every part of our lives to him just as he gave his life for us. This is what Paul has been reminding them of throughout the letter.

3. What is Paul asking the Thessalonians to work on regarding their sanctification (4:3) or holiness (4:7)? Is there an area that you need to work on, with God’s help?
4. We are called to be Holy, which means set apart, to live differently and in a way that will bring glory to God. Paul talks specifically about sexual immorality. How are the Thessalonian Christians to avoid sexual immorality (v3-8)?

Perhaps you could ask why sexual immorality is a particular concern for Paul? In 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul tells them to flee from two things; idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:15) and sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18). This was obviously an issue in the ancient world as well as our modern world. Jesus work on the cross has reclaimed sexuality (we can be forgiven), therefore, how can we be discipling people toward God’s intention for sexuality?

5. What kind of love do the Thessalonians show each other (v9)? What are some characteristics of this love?

6. How does Paul ask these people to live given their new lives as Christians (v11)? Give examples.

7. What will be the result of living such lives (v12)?

THINK IT THROUGH

What does it mean that we should be sanctified (4:3ff)?

Sanctified is defined as growing more and more holy or more like Jesus. We are told to be holy for God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). Is there a difference in God being described as holy and what it means for us to be holy? What does it mean for us to be holy and what does it mean for God to be holy? What are the differences and similarities?

MAKING IT STICK

What kind of love does Paul have in mind in verses 9-12?


What does this love involve?

How does verse 11 help us understand and display this kind of love?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Discipleship ministry at church and Paul Lucas as he leads the Discipleship Team.
- For small group leaders across the church, for their encouragement and growth and the raising up of new leaders
- For those involved with Read with Me (one to one bible reading) with others and for the growth of this ministry for sharing the gospel and growth as disciples.



“For we believe that Jesus died and rose
again, and so we believe that God will
bring with Jesus those who have fallen
asleep in him.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:14

STUDY SIX

Overflow of Hope

Passage:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

QUESTIONS

1. What do you think Paul means by those who are asleep (v13)?

He is referring to those who have died. Why do you think Paul refers to them as fallen asleep? Think about resurrection and what that means. Perhaps you could also look at Jesus healing in Mark 5:36-43. Is this a legitimate link?

There may be discussion here about what happens when people die. There are two prevailing views on this. One, is that when people die their soul is separated from their body and goes to be with Jesus and until the second coming. There is a sense in which they are enjoying the richness of Jesus' glory already but not fully as they are not in a physical state as is the raised Jesus. Secondly, people are essentially asleep and the next thing they will know is being face to face with Jesus. It is like going to bed at night and not being aware of the hours that have passed and then you wake up to the new day.

There is merit in both views but I believe this is a secondary issue and people may even pick a position based on what brings them the most comfort. Either way the believer has so much to look forward to as the new heavens and the new earth will mean a physical and eternal restoration in the presence of our Lord himself.

2. Is Paul saying that we should not grieve (v13)? What is he saying about grief?

3. What is Christian hope (v14)?

Just looking for people to express what they think and to solidify this understanding by articulating it.

4. How can a Christian be sure of what they hope for?

The resurrection of Jesus and the sending of his Holy Spirit as a guarantee. Also God has proved himself faithful and capable throughout history.

5. Do you find these words encouraging (v18)? How would you use them to encourage others going through a difficult time?

THINK IT THROUGH

In verse 17, Paul says that we will meet the Lord in the air. What do you make of this and where does Paul get this idea from?

Perhaps Acts 1:11 can help here.

MAKING IT STICK

How can we learn to grieve well?

How do we encourage others in their grief?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Pray for our Young Adults ministry.
- Pray for Brendan and Karina Pont and praise that they have been able to return to SE Asia this year.
- Give thanks to God for being generous to us and for the generosity of his people in their giving that ministries in our church can continue.
- Give thanks that God made provision for our holiness and for strength to remain holy in our hearts, minds and actions.

“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:9-10

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STUDY SEVEN

Overflow of Encouragement

Passage:

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever wondered about the specifics of the Day of the Lord? Before reading this passage, do you think it's important for us as Christians to know when the day of the Lord will come? Discuss.

2. Read 1 Thess 5:1-5. Considering the Thessalonians are under persecution at this time, what does Paul write to them and why is it of any comfort or encouragement to them? What do you think Paul means when comparing children of the Light & Day and Darkness & Night?

3. Why do you think it is important for Paul to remind the Thessalonians of this truth? And therefore why is it important for us to remind ourselves and each other that we are Children of the light and of the day?

4. Read 1 Thess 5:6-11. How should a Christian prepare themselves for the Day of the Lord even though no one knows the hour?

Perhaps you could also ask about the difficulties of persevering.

It may also be good to think about the Exodus and the people wandering in the desert? Their wandering in the desert was not just punishment for their rebellion with the 12 spies but to build character, to prepare them for the good that awaited them. You do not want spoiled brats being given such bounty, the nations who were already living there proved this to be their downfall. We wait not just because there are people who still need to hear the gospel but because we are being prepared for our inheritance.

5. In verse 8 what does Paul ask them to be? What do you think this means?

6. Read v 9-10. What is different for us as Christians? What does this mean for us?

This shows that the cross was not just about the forgiveness of sins but satisfying or calming God's wrath. When we do not believe that is what awaits us. Salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ reminds us that he bore the weight of God's anger for us.

7. What does Paul ask Thessalonian church AND us to do in vv11? What are we to encourage one another in and towards?

THINK IT THROUGH

How is 5:8 seen in the light of 1:3? What do you think Paul is wanting the Thessalonians to do while they wait for Jesus return?

MAKING IT STICK

How do you feel when you have been encouraged to persevere until the Day of the Lord?

How have you felt when you encourage someone to persevere until the Day of the Lord?

In what ways can we encourage and build each other up in the light of verses 5:6-8?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Pray for our interns Sam Heinrich, Nick Clegg, Chelsea Rumbel, Blake Scurr and Alex Furner. Pray that they will enjoy their time, that they will grow in their love and knowledge of Jesus and that they will make good decisions about ministry in the future.
- Pray for Matt and Paula Crowe in Colombia.
- Pray that we will walk diligently as children of God and citizens of heaven.
- Pray for Ben Razey as he leads our Integration ministries.

“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24

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STUDY EIGHT

Overflow of Joy, Thanks and Prayer

Passage:

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

QUESTIONS

1. In this letter the themes of faith hope and love have been prominent. According to verse 12-15, how should we love Christians leaders? How should we love other Christians?

2. What does Paul mean by living in peace with each other (v13)?

This can be difficult as there are those we do not spend time with or even get along with. It is never peace without faith, hope and love. Perhaps you could ask does Paul mean all people here or particularly the body believers? I think here he is talking to the body of believers. It does not mean that we should cause trouble in the community around us but to demonstrate that we have peace among us is a light to the world and glorifies God because he can achieve such a thing.

3. What is the nature of the work of Christian leaders that they should be held in highest regard (v13)?

Look at verse 12. How can we uphold and support those in leadership? This does not only mean those in paid ministry.

4. What does it mean to test everything (v21)?

Scripture is the basis for what we know about God and how he reveals himself. We must be careful with phrases such as “God told me...” or “I feel the Lord wants...” or things that do not agree with scripture, particularly the big story of the bible. We are not saying these statements are wrong, we are saying test them. This is another way we can encourage each other, we work these things out together and a particular responsibility of the leadership.

THINK IT THROUGH

What does Paul mean when he says “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire”? Can you think of other passages to support what you mean?

Perhaps references such as Romans 12:11, 2 Timothy 1:6-7, Matt 3:11, Acts 2:3-4 are worth looking at. Weima concludes, “The apostle, therefore, is forbidding the deliberate suppression of the person of the Holy Spirit or, more specifically, the manifestation of the Spirit’s work in the form of spiritual utterances or prophecies given by the believers in their communal worship.” page 406. The Spirit can use these prophecies or utterances to build up and encourage the church but this is not isolated from test everything.

What is Paul’s aim with these final, practical instructions?

LIVE IT OUT

What should Christians be doing when they meet together? Give examples.

How do verses 23-24 inspire you to endure as a Christian?

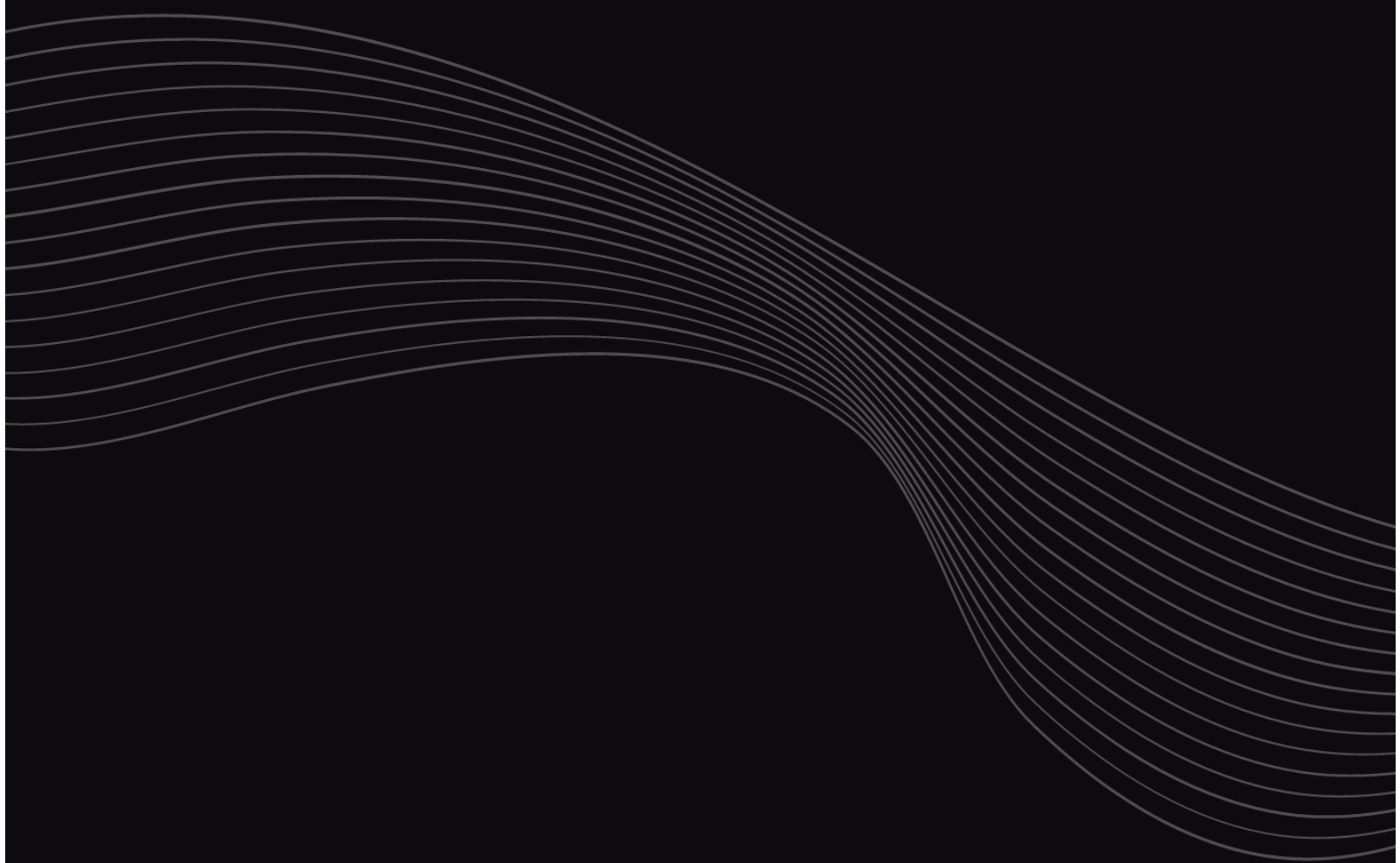
What has impacted you from this letter?

PRAYER

In addition to responding to today’s passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Pray for our small group leaders, that God will sustain them, give them insight and endurance.
- Pray for Rich Vassallo and his production team (both paid and volunteer). Thank God for their gifts and making it possible to meet online.
- Pray that we will be able to forgive as we have been forgiven.
- Pray that as we relate to each other we will do so with genuine humility and love. That we will do this for the sake of Jesus name and the good of our brothers and sisters.

SERMON NOTES



SERMON ONE – SUNDAY 25TH JULY

Overflow of Courage

SERMON TWO – SUNDAY 1ST AUGUST

Overflow of Faith, Hope and Love

SERMON THREE – SUNDAY 8TH AUGUST

Overflow of the Gospel of Love

SERMON FOUR – SUNDAY 15TH AUGUST

Overflow of Endurance

SERMON FIVE – SUNDAY 22ND AUGUST

Overflow of Holiness

SERMON SIX – SUNDAY 29TH AUGUST

Overflow of Hope

SERMON SEVEN – SUNDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER

Overflow of Encouragement

SERMON EIGHT – SUNDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER

Overflow of Prayer

SERMON NINE – SUNDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER

Overflow of Peace and Confidence