

## THE BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS

ISM Staff Training – Edge  
study supplemented



*Possibly the earliest of Paul's letters, the book of 1 Thessalonians was written from Corinth around A.D. 51-54. In this letter, Paul's seeks to:*

1. **confirm** young believers in truths they have already been taught
2. **exhort** them to live in holiness
3. **comfort** them re: Christ's second coming

### I. **Overview First Impressions** – read the complete letter as a letter written to you.

- a. Would you say that this letter is more practical than doctrinal, or vice versa?
- b. Describe the mood of the letter. Is Paul exhorting, comforting, describing, giving direction, persuading, warning? Any mood changes in the letter? If so, where?
- c. Outline – describe each section below with a short sentence or title.
  - i. 1:1
  - ii. 1:2-10
  - iii. 2:1-16
  - iv. 2:17-3:5
  - v. 3:6-13
  - vi. 4:1-12
  - vii. 4:13-18
  - viii. 5:1-11
  - ix. 5:12-15
  - x. 5:16-24
  - xi. 5:25-28
- d. What repetition did you notice? What words or concepts are repeated?
- e. What do you think Paul wanted to accomplish with his readers?
- f. Can you state the main message or theme of 1 Thess in one sentence? Give it a try!

## II. DISCIPLING PROCESS/DISCIPLES LIFESTYLE

What did Paul do to help the disciples in Thessalonica grow? What connection might there be between relationships and activities when discipling people?

1. As you read the letter write down the characteristics that you think define the idea of follow up. (Hint: What is the goal of follow up? (Look at 1:6, 2:12, 3:8, 3:13, 4:1,7,9 for examples)
2. From your above list, write a brief definition of follow up.
3. When does follow up end? What will characterize a new believer's life when follow up is complete?
4. Record those actions found in 1 Thess that explain or demonstrate how follow up was done.
  - 1:1,5:27
  - 1:2, 2:13, 3:10
  - 2:17,18; 3:10
  - 3:2
  - 1:5,6, 2:10,
  - 2:8,11
  - 3:4, 4:1,2, 5:11, 12
5. What topics did Paul cover in his follow up plan with the Thessalonians?
  - 1:9,10
  - 2:8,13;
  - 3:2-13;
  - 4:1-12,13-18;
  - 5:1-8, 12-22

6. Do you think that some of the topics Paul covered with the Thessalonians were tailored to their particular situation? If so, which ones? How can we apply this today? What topics are most applicable to this generation?
7. What attitudes do you see Paul displaying that are essential in doing follow up?
  - 2:7-9, 2:3,4, 6, 11-12, 19
  - 3:2,12 4:1,10 5:14
  - 5:11, 14 :23-24
  - Others
8. How would you describe Paul's relationship with them? How was Paul's relationship with them developed and deepened?
9. What do you think motivated Paul to do follow up? 2:3-8,19, 3:5,8-10

### III. 1 Thess 1-2:16

#### 1:2-10

- a. 1:2-10 What do you think Paul's purpose was in saying these things to the Thessalonians? What effect do you think it had in the hearts of these young believers?
- b. 1:2-10 Trace the role of each person of the trinity in the lives of the Thessalonians? What does Paul say about God, the Lord, and the Holy Spirit? How might these truths apply to us and our ministry?
- c. 1:3 What is the significance in Scripture of these 3 characteristics of a believer?
  - i. Romans 5:1-5, 1 Cor 13:13, Gal 5:5-6, Col 1:3-5, 1 Thess 5:8, Heb 6:10-12, 10:22-24, 1 Peter 1:3-9, 21-22 How are these three characteristics manifested outwardly in each of these passages?
- d. What does 1:4-10 reveal about the basis of Paul's assurance of the Thessalonians' salvation? How did Paul know they were chosen?
- e. In what ways do you think the gospel came with power 1:5? Rom 1:16, 15:13, 18-19, 1 Cor 2:4-5
- f. 1 Thess 1:9 "Turned" The Greek word is in aorist tense, turning once and for all. A single, definite acts. What can learn about idols from this verse? What are the idols people worship in our world, in your world?

#### 2:1-16

- g. In what ways was Paul's visit to them not in vain? 2:1
- h. Despite his treatment in Philippi, (Acts 16:11-40) why did Paul and his companions not let such suffering stop them? What do you think motivated them to keep going on to another place and do the same thing?
- i. Summarize in your own words the accusations Paul was likely answering in 2:4-6. How did Paul go about refuting these charges?
- j. 2:7 What metaphor does Paul used to describe his relationship to them? What do you think he is trying to communicate by using this image?
- k. What two things is Paul delighted to do for them? 2:8 What do think it means to share your "lives as well"?
- l. Why did Paul choose to support himself while living in Thessalonica? 2:9

- m. What is the point Paul was making in 2:10?
- n. 2:11-12 ‘as a father” What are some of the fatherly activities Paul practiced while with them? How does this contrast with motherly activities?
- o. What do you think is the significance of Paul using a parent-child model of relationship rather than a teacher – student, or commander – soldier, or brother – brother?
- p. Have you ever had a spiritual parent of any kind? More mother or father? How did they help you the most? If no, what kind of parent would help you the most?
- q. In 2:13 what are some possible implications for us when it says that it is the word of God that “is at work in you who believe”?
- r. How does Paul encourage them in face of their being persecuted? 2:13-16 How should we look at persecution of Christians today?
- s. Optional: Make a list of negatives that should not characterize a Christian worker found in 2:3-6. Do you see any of these cropping up in Christian ministries? How can you prevent these from taking root in your own life?
  - i. Now make a list of the positive attributes of a kingdom worker in 2:7-11. How can you develop these into your own life in a greater way?

#### IV. 1 Thess 2:17-3:13

- a. 1 Thess 2:17 says that Paul was “torn away” (literally to be orphaned) from the Thessalonians. Review how this happened in Acts 17:5-10. What do you think was Paul’s concern in regard to his relationship with the Thessalonians that he now addresses in this section?
- b. What do you think Paul means in 2:18 that Satan hindered us from coming to see them? How did Satan stop him? What insight does this give you regarding the nature of spiritual warfare that you may face? Does this setback by Satan seem to discourage Paul in light of what he says next in :19-20?
- c. What is the word picture Paul uses in :19-20? How does Paul feel about them? How do you think the Thessalonians would feel after reading these words? Has anyone ever said that to you? Do you feel that way about anyone else?
  - i. If this word picture of people we influence with the gospel message become our crown is really accurate, then why do you think so few people actually live that way?
  - ii. For more verses on crowns see 1 Cor 9:25, 2 Tim 4:8, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:4, Rev 2:10, 4:10. How do Christians earn such crowns? How is this related to salvation by grace? Is it a contradiction? Explain.
- d. What phrase is repeated in 3:1 and 3:5 that indicates Paul’s concern for them? From the context, what do you think caused Paul so much anguish? Have you ever had similar feelings toward anyone?
- e. How does Paul describe Timothy and why do you think Paul introduces him this way?
- f. What 3 purposes can you find in 3:2,5 for Paul’s sending Timothy to visit them? What do the words in 3:2 mean? Check other translations, word studies.
- g. Why do you think Christians are destined to suffer afflictions 3:3? How do you reconcile this in your own understanding of a loving God?
  - i. What does Paul think will help them endure these afflictions 3:3? How does this work in your life when you are suffering?
- h. Why do you think Satan is called the tempter in 5:5? What does he tempt believers to do or think?

- i. In 5:5 what do you think Paul meant when he said, “our labor would be in vain?” Does this mean they would lose their salvation or what? What does this say about the relationship between evangelism and discipleship?

**3:6-13**

- j. What is the general tone of this section? Notice the contrast that begins with the word “but” in 3:6.
- k. What specifically did Timothy report about the Thessalonians that made Paul so joyous? How did Paul respond when he heard this news? Anything we can learn or apply here?

**Supply** 3:10 Among the ancient Greeks, this word was used to describe the setting of a broken bone, the equipping of an army, the outfitting of a fleet of ships for battle, and the mending of torn nets.

- l. What do you think it means to “supply what is lacking in your faith?” How does this relate to practice of follow up?
- m. What 3 things does Paul pray for and how is each of these requests relevant to the Thessalonians current situation 3:11,12,13? What does this teach us about prayer/follow up?
- n. Why do you think Paul closes each section of the letter so far with a reference to Jesus’ return 1:10, 2:19, 3:13? What do you think was his purpose in doing this?

## V. 1 Thess 4

4:1-12 Instructions on how to live

- a. Summarize Paul's main point in each section below
  - i. 4:1-2
  - ii. 4:3-8
  - iii. 4:9-12
  
- b. What do you think the phrases "do this more and more" and "do so more and more" tell you about sanctification and disciplinemaking or anything else?

Instruction – the word is often used in connection with a military command, having a ring of authority to it.

Sexual immorality – Jews used the word for all the sexual activities practiced by Gentiles that were forbidden in Jewish Law.

- c. Why do think Paul speaks so directly about sexual immorality? Why do you think God places so much emphasis on this area of life? See Rom 6:19, 12:1, 1 Cor 6:19-20
  
- d. Note the contrast found 4:4 and 4:5
  
- e. What you do you is the connection between knowing God and engaging in sexual immorality? Is it possible for someone to know God and also be involved in sexual immorality?
  
- f. List as many motivations as you can for obedience in regard to sexual purity.
  
- g. Note the work of each member of the Trinity found in verses 6,7, and 8.
  
- h. Is there something you need to abstain from? Is there something you need to do more and more?
  
- i. How do you think that God taught the Thessalonians (and us) to love one another vs 9?
  
- j. What is Paul's strategy for them in regard to how they relate to the lost people living around them? :9-12 Does Paul anywhere in this letter command them to evangelize their neighbors?



4:13-18

- k. What is the background and the main theme of the next paragraph? Paraphrase verse 13
- l. In what way do you think Christians grieve differently than others when confronting death?
- m. What happens when a Christian dies; to his body and his spirit? See 2 Cor 5:8 and Phil 1:23-24.
- n. How can Paul be so sure that the believers who have recently died are with the Lord? :14,15
- o. Summarize what will happen when Christ returns? What are the sounds that will be heard? What will people see first? What happens after that? What is the end result?
- p. Have you ever encouraged someone else or yourself by talking about Jesus' return? Why or why not? What are some of the possible sources of encouragement found in this description of reunion?

## VI. 1 Thess 5

### 5:1-11 Equivalent Expressions for the “Last Days”

The “last days” (the day of salvation, [2 Cor. 6:2](#)) have already come but the “last day” (the day of salvation and wrath, [1 Thess. 5:1–11](#)) has not yet arrived. The following are equivalent expressions for the “last days” (the period of time between Jesus’ death and resurrection and the final judgment).

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| “the last days”  | <a href="#">Acts 2:17</a> ; <a href="#">2 Tim. 3:1</a> ; <a href="#">Heb1:2</a> ;<br><a href="#">James 5:3</a> |
| “the last hour”  | <a href="#">1 John 2:18</a>  |
| “the last time”  | <a href="#">Jude 18</a>  |
| “the last times” | <a href="#">1 Pet. 1:20</a>  |

- a. Day of the Lord – What does Jesus say about this topic. Mt 24:36, 42-44? What will happen on the Day of the Lord to Christians, nonChristians? Notice the “we” and “they” in this passage. Who are they?
- b. Why do you think the Thessalonians needed to hear from Paul again regarding this topic?
- c. What analogies does Paul use to describe Christians and nonChristians? How does a person who belongs to the light think and behave? Col 1:13-14
- d. Paul often likened the Christian to a soldier with armor. Rom 13:12, 2 Cor 6:7, 10:4, Eph 6 Why do you think he used this military image so much and what would this imply for us today?
- e. How do you respond to the thought of God’s coming wrath on unbelievers? 5:9 How do you think the Thessalonians might have responded in light of their current persecution?
- f. Meditate on 5:9-10. Paraphrase it. How does the message found here encourage you?
- g. What is the significance of these for your life today? What applications could be made in light of this coming reality?

**5:12-15** The Thessalonian church is made up of new converts and is only a couple of months old when this letter is written. Paul appointed elders to from among them to lead the church when he left. Apparently Timothy noticed some problems while there that Paul now addresses.

- h. What were the issues Paul now addresses and what does he encourage them to do about it? 5:12-15
- i. What is the “the work” Paul mentions in vs 13?
- j. What does Paul’s request to live at peace with one another tell about our natural inclinations, even in the church body?
- k. What four admonitions did Paul give to them in 5:14? Put them into your own words explaining what you think he meant. (idle – see 2 Thess 3:6,7, 11 to see what Paul says about this about one year later) What do you think is the difference between the weak and the idle?
- l. What role does patience play in discipleship? How important is it and why? How would you rate yourself in the area of patience with other people?
- m. What do you think was the particular challenge the Thessalonians faced in not repaying anyone evil for evil but instead seek to do good to everyone vs 15? Who most challenges you in this area?

**5:16-24**

- n. What are the commands given in :16-18? How are they connected to each other? How do they support each other, what do they have in common?
- o. If you were to follow these commands, what would you have to first believe about God, about your life, and about the future in order to do “this” 18b?
- p. How would you define Christian joy as found here? How does this differ from happiness or does it? Some verses on joy. Mt 5:12, Acts 15:31, Rom 5:2-5,12, 2 Cor 8:1-2, Phil 3:1, 4:4
- q. What are the 5 commands found in 5:19-22 and what do you think they mean? What questions do you have? How do you think they are they connected to each other? How do you think one can quench the Spirit, or put out it’s fire?
- r. In what ways could you “test everything” ie. A prophecy. See Acts 17:11, 1 Cor 12:3 and 1 John 4:1-3
- s. What do you think it means to avoid every “kind” of evil 5:22? What kinds are there?
- t. How does Paul’s prayer in 5:23,24 relate to the very specific instructions or commands he just gave them? What request does he make for them in two

different ways? What promise/truth does he remind them of? Who is responsible for our sanctification (being made holy)? How does this make you feel?

## VII. SUMMARY OF 1 THESSALONIANS

- A. Write a definition of discipling based on your observations from this study.
- B. What have you learned from Paul's example of discipling in 1 Thessalonians?
- C. Brainstorm on ways in which you could use Paul's discipling methods described in 1 Thessalonians in your ministry right now.
- D. What steps can you take to grow in your own discipling ministry?
- E. In what ways can a relationship be deepened with someone you're discipling when you don't necessarily have a natural friendship with them (different temperaments, backgrounds, etc.)?
- F. Finally, summarize what you've learned from the book of 1 Thessalonians on one page, if possible. This could be done in a written summary, an outline, a flow chart, an illustration, or whatever way would be most meaningful and memorable for you.

## VIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION OF 1 THESSALONIANS

*What has God revealed, clarified or affirmed regarding my...*

CALLING (Who I am in Christ, Who we are as Navigators)

CONVICTIONS (What I know and believe)

CHARACTER (Who I'm becoming as I follow and imitate Christ)

COMPETENCIES (What skills I already have and/or need to develop)

CONTRIBUTION (How I minister and serve- now and/or in the future)

What additional step(s) is God prompting me to take as a result of this study in any of these 5 areas?

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