

Notes



Prayer Time

- ◆ For issues raised in the study
- ◆ Use verses 23,24 and 28 as a benediction prayer.

Reflection (Complete at home)

The Epistles are full of examples where some people were weak while others were strong. Paul's exhortation is to encourage and build each other up through God's strength. We need His Spirit to enable us to become prayerful, grateful and persistent.

To think about:

Like the Sunshine (Lorraine Hayes)

I give you thanks and praise you, Lord,

For your goodness to me.

When I am in need of help and encouragement,

You are always there, Your love never lets me down.

When disappointments come and my faith is tried,

You assure me of your presence;

You give me strength and new hope

to walk on, along the pathway of life.

Your love to me is like the sunshine

that streams down in all its warmth

after the dull skies and the stormy weather has passed.

You bring light into my life;

I give you thanks and praise you, Lord.

Look back over your prayer requests from study 5.

⇒ Give thanks for the way God answered your prayers.

Study 8 1 Thessalonians 5:11–28

Resolute

1. *The rest of ch.5 could operate as an application of v.11.*
Create a heading to describe the issues covered by Paul:
 - Vs 12,13
 - Vs 14,15
 - Vs 16 – 18
 - Vs 19 – 22
2. Select one (or two) of the practices in these verses.
 - a) How might a Christian perspective differ from unbelievers?
 - b) What problems might you anticipate in doing this?
 - c) How could others help? (*Consider 5:11*)
3. *Paul was concerned their suffering (2:18) and trials (3:3), might have caused them to give up (3:5).*
 - ◆ How realistic are the exhortations to ‘rejoice always’ (v.16) and ‘give thanks in all circumstances’ (v.18) ?
 - ◆ Is there a difference between rejoicing/giving thanks IN all circumstances and FOR all circumstances? Explain , using an example.
4. What strategies might help in cultivating a spirit of continuing prayer and gratitude, even in difficult circumstances?
5. Reflect on all of 1 Thessalonians.
 - a) Brainstorm the main themes and then write a one (or two!) sentence summary of the entire letter.
 - b) Discuss the relevance (or otherwise) of this letter to our current church situation.

Sharing Time

Share a verse/idea that impacted you. Explain why?.

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Study 1 – I Thessalonians 1:1-5 A Good Start

1. Read Acts 17:1-10

The Thessalonian church did not have an easy beginning. Contrast this with Paul's summation in 1 Thess 1:2-5.

What, do you think, enabled them to start so well?

2. Brainstorm : What would an ideal church be like? Compare this with your experience in church/es. Why might there be a difference?
3. Paul could have merely praised their work, labour and endurance (v.3) What more is added by his reference to **faith, love and hope?** (see also Rev 2:2,4)
4. Can you think of any linkages that might exist between **faith, love, and hope?** (see also Gal 2:16, James 2:14-17, 1 Cor 15:16-19)
5. What can we learn about evangelism from vs 4 - 6? Is there anything that stands out to you from this?

Sharing Time

Paul highlights how a good start is founded on **faith, love and hope.**

Which of these would you like to develop?

How might growth in these impact our church?

Prayer Time

- ⇒ For those we know who are coping with loss and grief;
- ⇒ That we may be 'alert and self controlled' as we anticipate the Lord's return;
- ⇒ Praise God that we will stand spotless before His throne because of His work in our lives.

Reflection (Complete at home)

Make a time line:

- ⇒ start at your birth.
- ⇒ List some of the highlights of your life - most important events and experiences

Make another timeline, starting today, under two headings:

- A) Things I would like to do before I die—my 'bucket list'
- B) How I want to grow/mature as a Christian before I meet my Lord in the air.

A Challenge:

Begin each day this week with the thought:

I will live today expecting

Christ could return before I go to sleep

Come along to the next meeting ready to discuss how this thought affected your actions.

Study 7 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11

Ready and Waiting

1. Who have you been close to through their dying days?
 - ◆ How did their death affect you?
 - ◆ What else has shaped your view of death and dying?
2. *Many Christians claim they are not afraid of dying as they look forward to heaven.*
How do we achieve the balance between praying for healing and the inevitability of death?
3. Is it OK to grieve or does that indicate a loss of hope? (v.13)
 - ◆ How can we support those who are struggling with the loss of a loved one?
4. *As the Thessalonians expected Jesus' return was imminent, they worried that those who died before then might miss out.*
What can we learn from Paul's explanation?
5. If God offered to reveal to you exactly when Jesus will return, would you want to know? Why or why not?
 - ◆ How would this knowledge affect you?
 - ◆ What difficulties might you anticipate in telling others?

Sharing Time

- ◆ How does the promise of resurrection affect you?
- ◆ What has helped when you have been grieving?
- ◆ What has been unhelpful at this time?

Prayer Time

When Paul thought about the **faith, hope and love** evident in the Thessalonians, it led him to thank God and to pray for them. Use this model to thank God and pray for each other.

Reflection (Complete at home)

As Paul stated what he was thankful for, he specifically mentioned their ***work of faith, labour of love, and steadfastness of hope.***

Consider the role of these in your life:

Faith drives us to work –to serve God and follow His standards.

What does faith in God drive you to do?

Love for Jesus motivates our labour for others

Do you ever resent helping others?

How can your love for Jesus impact your motivation?

Belief in Christ includes a steadfast hope in His future return.

How does the promise of Jesus's return give you hope?

How could this hope impact your day to day life?

To Think About:

When you promise to pray for others, do you pray for them just once? Perhaps when it comes to mind?

A minute here or there? This is not the model Paul used.

Prayer is our direct link with God. Only He can change us and others and bring about spiritual growth.

Prayer should be a major part of our lives. Something we dedicate ourselves to...

... rather than merely being an afterthought.

Study 2 – 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Transformed

1. *Begin with a game of Charades* – encourage a couple of people to act out the name of a song.
How does Charades work? What helps us recognise what they are trying to communicate?
2. What evidence is there for how the Thessalonian's belief in Jesus changed their lives?
Consider the following word usages in your response:
v.6 *“Affliction”* (severe suffering) - *crushing grapes until they burst*
“Joy” (of the Holy Spirit) – *a contrast to resignation or fatalism*
3. What do you notice about how these new Christians impacted their society? *Note: v.8 “rang out” (sounded forth) - the loud sound of a trumpet blast*
4. *Look up Phil 3:17, 1 Cor 11:1, 1 Thess 1:5-7.*
Paul has a high regard for role modelling.
What could we learn from others? Are there any risks?
5. As idol worship was commonplace in Thessalonica, the contrast with their conversion would have been visible (v.9).
What lessons can those who have been Christians for many years learn about evangelism from vs 1-10?

Sharing Time

What habits/practices could you encourage others to imitate?

Prayer Time

- ◆ Ask God to direct our steps in the path of His choosing;
- ◆ For strength to stand against temptation
- ◆ For wisdom in knowing how to support others

Reflection (Complete at home)

To think about:

One of the great weaknesses of contemporary Christianity is our neglect of Christian ethics in our teaching and our practice. As a result, we have become known as people who preach the gospel rather than as those who live and adorn it.

- ◆ Am I committed to loving those within my church and community?
- ◆ Am I honest in my dealings with others?
- ◆ How obvious is it that my lifestyle has not succumbed to the influences of greed and consumerism?
- ◆ Am I encouraging stability in my family life, in contrast to the unfaithfulness and relationship breakdown around me?
- ◆ How am I managing sexual temptation?

Don't be discouraged! Remember:

- ⇒ Growing in our faith is a lifetime experience with our Lord.
- ⇒ The Christian life was never meant to be a standstill or an 'arrived at' experience.
- ⇒ The will of God is to grow us in holiness and love, not in compromise or selfishness.
- ⇒ It is the Spirit of God who produces the fruit of the Spirit and self-control in our lives.

Study 6 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Standing Firm

1. **Warning:** This study might offend!
Discuss what this might mean.
2. How important is sex in our society?
Compare v.7 with how the mass media portrays our culture?

3. *While Jewish converts came with an understanding of OT morality, Gentiles came to Christianity with few moral restraints.*

How does Paul's teaching in vs 1- 8 add to our understanding of Christian sexual relationships?

Try to be specific rather than generalising.

4. Read vs 9,10. How might we demonstrate that:
 - a) Love between Christians is different to friendship?
 - b) church is not just another social group?

What difficulties might we encounter?

5. Discuss this statement:
Paul presents a striking alternative to our current neglect of ethics. Are we so afraid of being labelled "legalists" because we "are not under the law" that we feel free to ignore and even disobey God's moral laws and commandments?

Sharing Time

"The time I live in is a time of great turmoil. My hope is in God."

Frederick the Great, King of Prussia 1766

Share some struggle you face and how knowing God helps

Prayer Time

Thanksgiving for our life in Christ and ongoing transformation;
Ask God to help us share the gospel by our words and actions;
Intercessory prayer for members experiencing hard times, trials or suffering.

Reflection (Complete at home)

In their culture, like ours, the Thessalonians had many potential excuses. They chose to model their lives on the examples of Jesus and Paul. We need to show others how to follow Jesus as well as learning from them.

To think about:

- a) Am I an imitator of Christ?
- b) Am I growing/maturing as a Christian?
- c) Would people notice my life has been transformed?
- d) When hard things happen, am I joyful and steadfast in my faith?
- e) What idols do I need to turn from to serve God with the allegiance he deserves?

In the midst of hard times there is a tendency to allow doubt to cloud our perspective. We must learn to live in the present in the light of the future.

There is no medicine like hope and no incentive so great as the expectation of something better tomorrow.

O.S. Marden, 1897. Founder, Success Magazine

Study 3 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Authentic

1. Paul seems to be defending himself from accusations he tricked them into becoming Christians.

How does he defend his:

- a) message?
- b) attitude?
- c) behaviour?

2. Why might Paul's opponents be slandering him?
3. What different point/s is Paul making in his mother and father analogies?
4. Was Paul bold by nature? *See 1 Cor. 2:3 - 5.*
Contrast this with *2 Cor. 4:16 - 18.*
How could you explain the difference?
5. How significant is our personality in sharing our faith?
6. Discuss Paul's understanding of what it means to be an authentic Christian. *See also 1 Cor 9:24-2, Phil 1:27-28*

Sharing Time

- ◆ What challenge/s have you faced that made it hard for you to persevere?
- ◆ How helpful were other Christians?
- ◆ What affected their ability to support you?
- ◆ How can we support other Christians better?

Sharing Time

A time when you were strengthened in your faith because of hard times. What helped you? What was unhelpful?

Prayer Time

He alone is my rock and my salvation...

I shall never be shaken. Psalm 62:2

- ⇒ Ask God to strengthen us to stand firm.
- ⇒ Use verses 12,13 as a guide for praying for each other.

Reflection (Complete at home)

Paul inevitably turned to God for guidance, in the ordinary problems of life. He knew the only way to prepare to meet God was to live with Him, daily.

- ⇒ *Could our inconsistency as Christians be due to our failure to seek His help and guidance?*
- ⇒ *Do we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives?*

List your concerns, desires, and prayer requests for:

- a) yourself :
- b) your family:
- c) your friends:
- d) your church:

Keep this and refer to it later to see God 's response.

Study 5 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

Connected

1. Brainstorm:
 - ◆ Is it possible to be a Christian without going to a church?
 - ◆ Why should we meet together as a church?
 - ◆ How can belonging to a church help us stay connected:
 - a) to God?
 - b) to each other?
 - ◆ What could our church do better?
2. Paul was worried their trials might have caused them to give up on Christianity (vs 3,5)
 - ◆ What 'trials' concerned Paul?
 - ◆ Are there other trials that could challenge our faith?
 - ◆ What has helped you when you've been tempted to give up?
3. *The mark of a successful church in the New Testament is gauged by how much people learn to love each other, forgive one another, listen to one another, support and pray for one another and reach out to those in need around them.*
(Waiting for the Second Coming - Ray C. Stedman)
Discuss the accuracy, or otherwise, of this statement.
4. Think of a prominent Christian who has been caught out in some failing (such as Brian Houston). What can we learn from the way they have been treated by:
 - a) the world;
 - b) other Christians
5. Paul already praised them for their love (v.6). What can we learn from his praying that their love might increase (v.12)?

Prayer Time

Use this week's study to pray for authenticity
e.g. for courage to speak the gospel and help to be devout, upright, and blameless.

Reflection (Complete at home)

Paul's life was authentic. It could bear close inspection:

- ◆ He persevered in spreading the good news, even though he knew he would suffer;
- ◆ He was sustained and strengthened in his suffering;
- ◆ His message was genuine, his motives pure, his methods sincere;
- ◆ He exhorted, he encouraged and was an example;
- ◆ His goal was to walk in a manner worthy of the God who called him into His own kingdom.

Does this sound like you?

Paul reminisces with the Thessalonians about his life and work among them.

- ◆ Jot down some of your memories of the past year, Include the high and low points.
- ◆ Celebrate these memories by thanking God for your year.

Study 4 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Responders

1. Share a favourite bible verse and explain why it is special to you.
2. Why is Paul giving thanks to God in verse 13?
Why is it important for us to recognize the Bible is God's Word, and not just the word of men.?

Consider these thoughts:

- ⇒ Is a "Bible based" sermon the word of God? What concerns might we have?
 - ⇒ Could some teachings be discounted as cultural and so not applicable to us? How do we decide?
 - ⇒ Have you ever tried to share the Gospel, only to find the conversation was sidetracked? What issues have people raised? What can we learn?
 - ⇒ What can we learn from *2 Peter 1:20-21, Hebrews 4:12*?
3. What evidence of their conversion encouraged Paul? (Refer to both chapters 1 & 2).
What might encourage you in the lifestyle of another Christian?

4. Why were the Jews opposed to Christianity?

Consider these thoughts:

- ⇒ Are there similarities or differences in our opposition to quasi Christian sects (such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons)?
- ⇒ Does persecution always follow the preaching of the Word?
- ⇒ How would you describe the persecution Christians encounter in Australia? What can we learn ?

5. *Paul recognised Satan blocked his return (V.18).*
When we don't 'succeed' could we also blame Satan?
What problems might arise from this approach?
What other explanations might there be?

Sharing Time

- ◆ A frustrating time when you tried to do something you believed was right and found it hard going;
- ◆ How you read the Bible. Would it be helpful to be accountable to someone else?
Perhaps you could use the free *You Version Bible App*.
<https://www.youversion.com/the-bible-app/>

Prayer Time

Ask for God's help and encouragement to::

- ◆ Look forward to reading His word regularly;
- ◆ Expect the Holy Spirit to speak to us through His Word.
- ◆ Change us as we apply His word in our lives.

Reflection (Complete at home)

Encourage a Christian friend.

Express your appreciation by:

sending a text, ring them, make something for them, catch up for coffee.

What place does the Word of God have in your life?

- ◆ Is the Word of God, living and active in your life?
- ◆ Does it transform your attitudes, values, behaviour and relationships?

Think of a time:

- ◆ God's word **convicted** you.
- ◆ God's word **comforted** you.
- ◆ God's word **challenged** you.