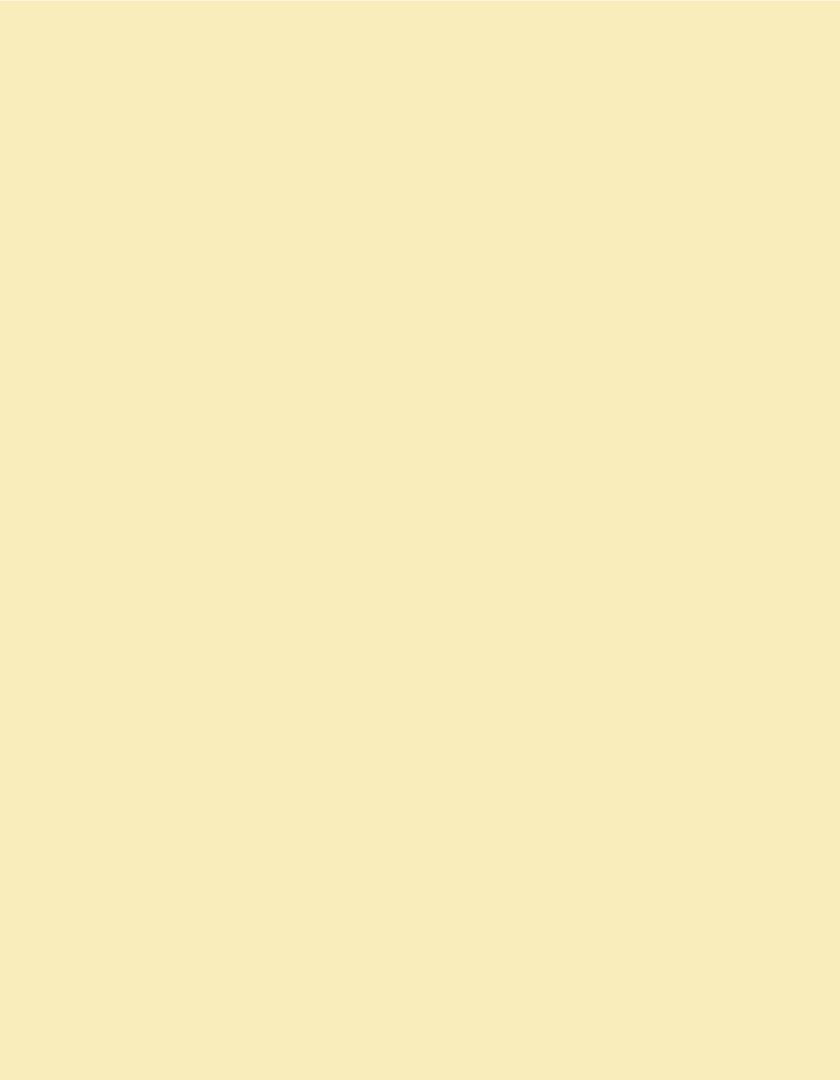
# EOLE HOPE

THESSALONIANS

study guide | part one



#### Dear Cherry Hills family,

This study is an attempt for us to move deeper into our vision as a church, to see people of every generation giving themselves fully to Jesus and His mission. Our strategy for accomplishing this vision is by pursuing life together with Jesus, one another and our community and world. So, while this study can certainly be used individually to grow in your relationship with Jesus personally, my prayer is that you might go one step further and use this tool to grow with others, specifically in a life group. We truly believe that we cannot grow as disciples of Jesus without doing it together.

So, a word about how to use this study. Each week includes five days of studying the passage of 1 Thessalonians that we will be preaching on Sunday morning. Our suggestion is that you do the study before that Sunday and then use both the study and the message as your discussion guide in your life group. More than anything, I hope your discussions are less about filling out answers and repeating them and more about paying attention to what the Holy Spirit is highlighting for you as you study the passage that week. The two most important questions I will ask every week are: (1) What most stood out to you and why? (2) What do you sense the LORD is prompting you to do as a result of what stood out? In my opinion, learning to pay attention to those two questions is what it means to "walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16)

Foundationally we believe that the Bible is our source of authority in life, and in order to grow deeper with the LORD studying the Bible is a necessary discipline. So...I want to pray for you as you begin this journey with us with a famous prayer from the book of Numbers: "May the LORD bless you and keep you; may the LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the LORD turn His face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

In Christ, Pastor Steve



#### Author and Background

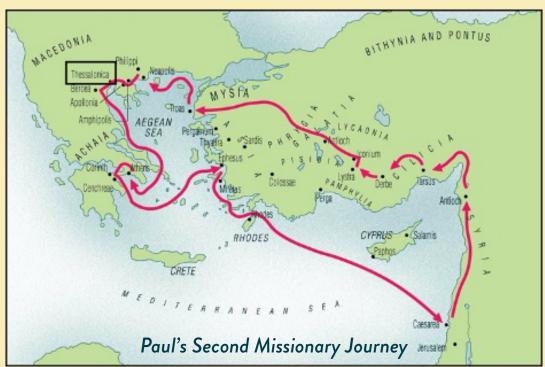
The author of 1 Thessalonians is the Apostle Paul, though he also mentions his traveling companions Silas and Timothy. Luke explains some of the background of Paul's relationship with this church in Acts 17. On his second missionary journey (see map), after spending time in Philippi that ultimately saw Paul placed in jail, Paul is released and continues his ministry by heading to Thessalonica. Unfortunately, his stay there was short due to a mob that was looking for Paul and Silas. Although he had to leave quickly, we know that he continued to communicate with this young Christian church, even before he wrote this letter (see 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3 where we learn he sent Timothy). This letter is one of Paul's earliest written, approximately in 51 AD.

#### Themes

Paul addresses multiple themes in this letter:

- 1. Ministry & The Church—Paul is, of course, writing a letter to a church he planted, and so he speaks to this church with great concern with a desire to see them grow.
- 2. Suffering & Persecution—Immediately in chapter 1 we come across the issue of suffering. Both Paul and the church faced suffering, but the conversation about suffering runs throughout this whole letter.
- 3. The Future & Christ's Second Coming—Perhaps it was the suffering that brought up this topic, but this is one of the most prominent themes in both 1 & 2 Thessalonians as the church was asking important questions about the future coming of Jesus: what happens to those who die? What happens to those who are alive? What about those who do not believe? Paul writes to give this church hope and confidence.
- 4. The Christian Life & Godliness—As he does in almost every letter, Paul turns from theology to practice and spends the end of the letter explaining how faith works itself out in life.

Purpose
To strengthen the Thessalonian Christians in their faith and assure them of Christ's return.





Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word. Day 1 Thessalonica - As the Life Application Bible explains, "Thessalonica was the capital and largest city of Empire...With its international flavor, however, came many pagan religions and cultural influences that 1. Read the entire letter of 1 Thessalonians then answer the following: What most encouraged you or stood out to you? What confused you? Are there any specific questions you hope to have answered in this study? If 1 Thessalonians was somehow erased from the Bible, what would we lose? In other words, what does it uniquely contribute?

# Day 2

A				
	Read	1 Thessa	lonians	1.1

What does it mean to be "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"? Are you spiritually located there? How do you know?

2. With the exception of Galatians, Paul begins all of his letters with the greeting "grace and peace to you." Why do you think "grace" always precedes "peace"? What does that mean to you?

#### 3. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3.

Even though his time with them was short, what does Paul remember thankfully about the Thessalonians?

4.	Read	1	Thessalonians	1.2-3
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When you think of faith, love, and hope what related words come to mind? In v. 3, Paul ties these words to the active words: "work," "labor," and "endurance." Are you surprised by this? Why or why not?

Endurance—Literally, "bearing up patiently under a heavy load." The Thessalonians' ability to bear up under a heavy load was based on their hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Of all the things you do during the week, which activities, if any, could be described as "work produced by faith"?

# Day 3

#### 1. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5.

In light of Paul's previous life as a proud Pharisee, what significance do you see in his calling a largely Gentile group "brothers & sisters"? What implications might that have for us today?

2. How do you understand the idea of being "chosen" by God? Although the doctrine of election has often sparked controversy (see note), Paul views it not as a weapon for fighting but as a tool for encouragement. How could the Thessalonians be confident that God has elected them? How should this truth embolden us for evangelism?
Chosen—This is a debated concept within the church, but both the OT and NT reveal that God has chosen to bless some individuals with eternal life (see Deuteronomy 4:37; 7:6-7; Isaiah 44:1-2; Romans 9; Ephesians 1:4-6, 11; Colossians 3:12; 2 Thess 2:13). It is equally clear that everyone is personally responsible before God for his or her decision to trust (or not to trust) in Jesus Christ (see John 3; Romans 5). The concept here is called "divine election and human responsibility." Both are true and clear in Scripture, but how they can hold together may be one of those mysteries that finite minds cannot comprehend!
3. How did Paul know that they were "chosen?" How do you know God has chosen you, personally?
4. Explain in your own words how the gospel came to the Thessalonians. How did the gospel come to you? Do people see in your life the evidence that the Word of God has come in power, and that you have been noticeably transformed?

# Day 4

Day 4
1. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:6.
How is it possible to have joy even when following Christ leads to suffering as Paul says in 1:6?  Suffering—In this church suffering came from two sources: the Jewish converts in the church were
hated and persecuted by the unbelieving Jews of the synagogue who were extremely hostile to the gospel of Jesus. The Gentile converts suffered in the sense that they had to swim against the current of idolatry that was rampant everywhere.
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8a.
Have you "become a model" to anyone? What about our church? When people watch us do life together do they glimpse what it means to embrace and embody Jesus? Why or why not?
3. What was the story that people everywhere were telling about the Thessalonians?

Rang out—Paul uses a word that can also be translated as "reverberated." He sees this church not only as those who received the gospel, but who send it on its way to other places.

4. Many Christians today in the West face increasing pressure to individualize and privatize their faith. How do vv. 7-8a challenge us along these lines? How does it challenge you personally?

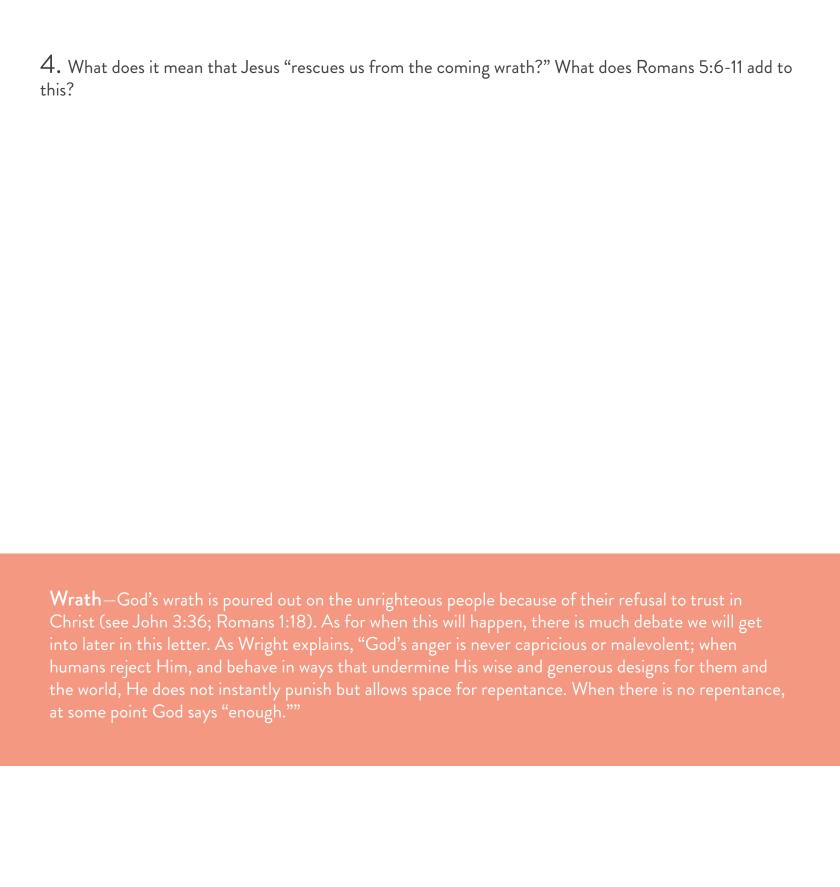
# Day 5

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:8b-10.

How would "turning from idols" have been an incredibly difficult thing for the Thessalonians to do? What might be parallels for us today of turning away from the "powers" of this world to the one true God and His one true Son?

Idols—NT Wright reminds us, "The gods of Greek and Roman paganism were everywhere. If you were going to plant a tree, you would pray to the relevant god. If you were going on a business trip, a quick trip to the appropriate shrine was in order. If you or your son or daughter was getting married, serious, and costly worship of the relevant deity was expected. At every turn in the road the gods were there: unpredictable, possibly malevolent, sometimes at war among themselves, so that you could never do too much in the way of placating them, making sure you'd got them on your side."

Turned—This is the same concept of what it means to repent: to turn from something once and for all in a deliberate choice and act.
2. What is Paul telling us about idols in this statement? Do you have any idols? How would you know if you made something into an idol?
3. How does Christian waiting differ from worldly waiting, and why is this a crucial distinction?



# Week One Conclusion



1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

# THESSALONIANS 2:1-16

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.



# Day 1

#### 1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16.

What is this section primarily about? How does it compare with chapter 1? How do you specifically see Paul's pastoral heart on display in these verses?

#### 2. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2.

Paul describes his previous ministry experiences (see introduction). How did these episodes affect Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians? Read through Acts 16:11-40 and summarize the suffering Paul had to endure.

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contests. The	he English woi	rd agony is deriv	ved from the	Greek form o	f this word.		

2. Why didn't Paul and his companions let such suffering stop them?

3. Can you think of a recent time where you resisted sharing the gospel with someone because of fear or embarrassment? If so, what practical steps can you take to imitate Paul in his "daring" while speaking to others about the gospel?

# Day 2

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6.

Summarize in your own words the accusations Paul was likely answering in these verses. What evidence does he cite that these accusations are false?

**Trick**—According to NavPress's study on 1 Thessalonians, "The Greeks used this word to describe a lure for catching fish. It eventually came to depict any type of cunning used for profit. There were all kinds of wandering teachers during the first century who resorted to various gimmicks to attract people and get their money. This is what Paul has been accused of by enemies."

Praise from people—This is again a reference to the traveling philosophers and speakers that were common during this time in the Roman Empire. They would go from city to city, entertaining and speaking trying to grow a large personal following. Their goal was two things: fame and fortune. In this whole section Paul is being accused of this very thing with the Thessalonians and reveals why he is making such a strong defense.

2. What motives does Paul say drives him and his companions to minister to the Thessalonians to preach the gospel amid opposition? What is the "what," "why," and the "how" of Paul's ministry?

3. What made Paul unique to other traveling teachers of his day? What are the unhealthy or ungodly motivations for ministry that Paul mentions in vv. 3-6?

4. How have you seen mixed motives at work in you when it comes to your own Christian service?

A	1				
		Read 1	Thessa	lonians	2:8-12.

What two things do Paul and his companions say they were delighted to do because of their love for the Thessalonians? What do you think is involved in "sharing our lives?"

2. Why was it so important to Paul that he supported himself financially, rather than living off donations from the Thessalonians even though he could ask for them (v. 9)? How does 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12 add to this? Does he believe this should be true for every minister of the gospel (see 1 Timothy 5:17-18)?

3. What does Paul want the Thessalonians to do according to v. 12? How would you describe what it means to "live lives worthy of God?" How do the following verses add to this:

Ephesians 4:1-3—

Philippians 1:27-30—

Colossians 1:9-14-

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 —

How would Paul, Silas and Timothy have modeled these things to the Thessalonians?

4. What would it look like for you to "live [a life] worthy of God" this week? Be specific.
Day 4
1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-12 again.
Paul uses the metaphor of "mother" (v. 8) and "father" (v. 11) in this section. What does this reveal about his heart for them? Is it significant to you that Paul chooses this relationship instead of "teacherstudent?" If so, why?
2. Have you ever had a spiritual parent who cared for you and encouraged you in your spiritual growth? If so, how did that affect you? Who are you a spiritual parent to? What does that mean to you?
3. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16.
What do you think Paul means when he says the Word of God "is indeed at work in you who believe" (v. 13)? How would we know if it's at work in us?

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:	12_16

Suffering is a reality in our world today for believers. How does the church typically react to suffering?

2. Christians tend to believe that God's blessing has departed from them if they are suffering from some sort of persecution. How do these verses counter this kind of thinking?

3. Why would the Jews not want the gospel to spread (v. 14)? What reasons do people today have for not wanting the message of Jesus to be proclaimed?!

From the Jews—As Wright once again explains, "It is important to realize that when Paul says "Jews" here he doesn't simply mean all Jews. He himself was a Jew, as were all the very first Christians. But Paul knows, because he was a part of the movement himself, that within Judea many Jews had been bitterly opposed not only to Jesus, resulting in their authorities handing Him over to the Romans for crucifixion, but also opposed to the groups that sprang up after His resurrection, hailing Him as Messiah and Lord. Believing passionately that God's salvation was for them only, these Jews regarded as blasphemous the message of a crucified Messiah who offered salvation on equal terms to Gentiles as well."

4. We are often uncomfortable discussing God's wrath (see note from last week on this). How do different churches or different people in the church today respond to the idea of God's wrath? How would you explain it to someone?



1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!



### Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

# Day 1

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:10.

What do you notices in these verses? What do we learn about Paul and his relationship with Thessalonians? Write down phrases that lead you to that conclusion.

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 and Acts 17:5-10.

What event separated Paul from the Thessalonians? Who opposed Paul? According to 2:18, who else opposed him? What do you think that means?

3. How might Satan "block our plans" today? What are some dangers of being under-aware of the demonic realm? What are the dangers of being over-aware? Are you aware of Satan's influence in your plans? Why or why not?

1.	Read 1	Thessa	lonians	2:19-	20.
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How does Paul refer to the church here? How do you view the local church? What would need to change to share Paul's view for you?

2. What does Paul say will be his victory crown at the second coming? What do the following verses add to Paul's reference to a crown and how a Christian can earn them?

**Crown**—This would have been a reference to the laurel wreath presented to the winner of the Greek games.

1 Corinthians 9:29-

2 Timothy 4:8—

James 1:12—

1 Peter 5:4-

Revelation 2:10-

Revelation 4:10-

3. How do you think the earning of crowns relates to the offer of salvation by grace alone? Is it a contradiction? Why or why not?

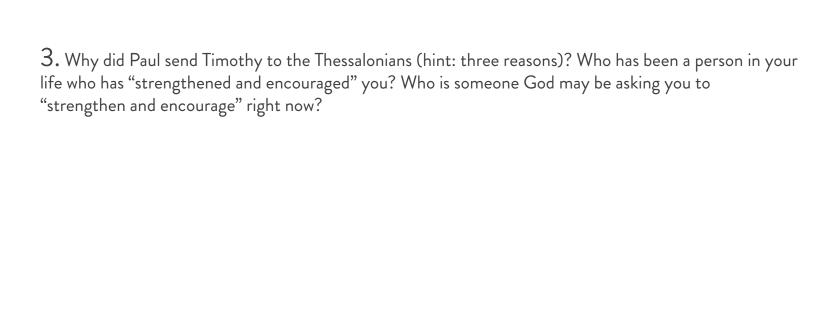
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What phrase does Paul use twice that reveals his feelings for the Thessalonians (see v. 1, 5)? Why do you think he felt this way?

#### 2. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:2.

How does Paul describe Timothy here? Why would he make such a point about it to this church?

**Co-worker**—When Paul refers to Timothy as a "co-worker" in God's service, he chooses a word the Greeks used to denote the service of a table waiter. The term eventually came to signify lowly service of any kind. The early Christians adopted this word to give expression to the service that they were to render habitually to both God and others. Christianity without service was inconceivable to the first-century Christians.



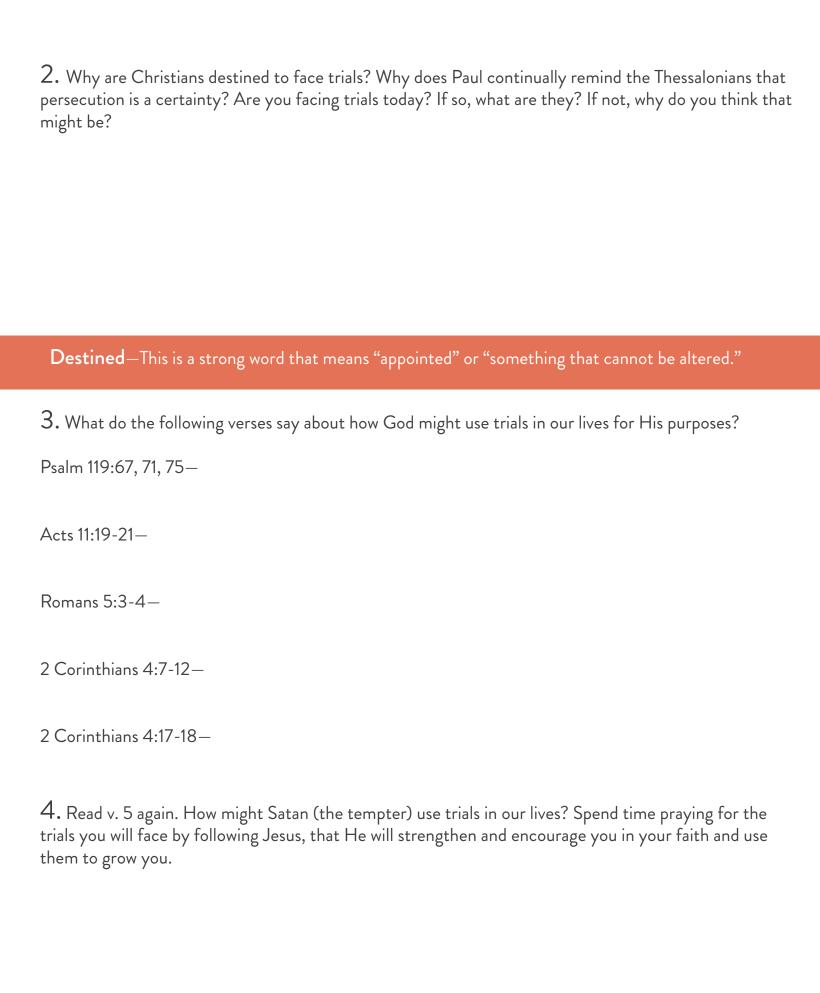
Strengthen & Encourage—As NavPress points out, "The word strengthen carries the idea of making firm or solid" and was often used to describe a buttress that would provide support to a building. Encourage carried the idea "to call to the side of. It portrays one person standing alongside another in order to put courage into them." So Timothy was standing alongside the Thessalonians and encouraging them in their difficulty.

# Day 4

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:3-5.

Summarize what Paul's concern here is for the Thessalonians.

**Unsettled**—Paul uses a word here that literally referred to a dog wagging its tail! As NavPress points out, "In the present context it pictures the Thessalonians going back and forth because of their persecutions."



## Day 5

4					
	Read	1 Thessa	lonians	3.6-10	

What three things does Paul experience from Timothy's report about the Thessalonians' faith (see v. 7 & 9)? Do you share Paul's enthusiasm and joy when you hear of others' faith growing? If not, how could you develop a heart for that?

Really Live—Paul was so worried about the Thessalonians that he lived with great anxiety and concern. But Timothy's news so revived him that it lifted him out of his gloom, and, "in a figurative sense, enabled him to really live." Likely this just means his soul was so joyful over the news of his "childrens" firm faith he felt rejuvenated.

2. If Timothy were to visit you, what news would he bring back to Paul about your faith and love? What might Paul say to you?

3. What does it mean to "stand firm in the Lord" (v. 8)? How can we know if we are doing that? What else might we be tempted to stand firm in?

# Week Three Conclusion



1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:10 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!





1. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13.

In your own words, write out what Paul prays for the Thessalonians here:

- 2. Paul asks God for three things in 3:11-13. List these, and then state the relevance of each request in light of what the Thessalonians were dealing with?
- v. 11—
- v. 12-
- v. 13—
- 3. In what ways are we dealing with similar things today?

# Day 2

1. Paul will often pray for the churches in the middle of his letters. Read the following prayers and note how they are similar and/or different than his prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13.
Ephesians 1:15-23—
Ephesians 3:14-21—
Philippians 1:9-11—
Colossians 1:9-12—
2. What do you learn about Paul from these prayers?
3. What do you learn about prayer from Paul's prayers?

#### 1. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13.

Paul understands how important it is to strengthen one another during suffering so that all believers can stand firm in their faith. What specific steps can you or your Christian community take to help strengthen someone who is in the midst of suffering or difficulty?

2. Who might Paul be referring to when he says "everyone else" in v. 12? Why was loving those people so important?

3. Has your love for "everyone else" grown stagnant over the years? If so, why? Who is an "everyone else" in your life that you could ask God to help you love?

# Day 4

	1. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 with a focus on v. 13.
	Before reading the definitions below answer the following questions: what do you think it means to be "blameless"? Why would Paul call Christians to this kind of life?
	2. What does it mean for you to live a "blameless" life today? Are there areas where you needed to be "strengthened" in this?
	3. Who are the "holy ones" Paul refers to in v. 13? Do you consider yourself one of God's "holy ones"? Why or why not? How does it make you feel to be considered a "holy one" to God?
t	Blameless—As NavPress notes, "Paul speaks quite often about the need for being "blameless." The term refers not to absolute, sinless perfection, but to whole-hearted, unmixed devotion to doing God's will in all things."

Holy Ones—This can also be translated as "saints." To Paul, a saint is all Christians, because all have been made holy by Jesus both alive and "asleep" as he likes to say.

Based on this prayer, create a prayer you can use for yourself or for others below. Memorize it and start putting it into action.



1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!



Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.



As for other matters— After personal messages of encouragement and explanations of his current situation, as he does in every letter, Paul shifts to gospel application: how the Thessalonians' faith should be played out in everyday life.

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

What stands out to you when you read these verses? How do these words feel to you living in today's day and age?

2. Before we get into the specifics of sexual immorality, how would you respond to someone who asked you why we should obey God in the first place? In other words, what should be a Christian's motivation in obedience?

3. How do the following verses add to the why a Christian obeys:
Romans 14:17-18—
2 Corinthians 5:9-10—
Ephesians 5:8-10—
Colossians 1:9-14—
1 Thessalonians 4:1—
Would you say these verses capture why you obey? Why or why not?
Day 2
Day 2  1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2.
Why do you think Paul felt the need to remind the Thessalonians that his instructions to them were
given under the authority of Jesus Christ? Why might this still be important for us to remember today?

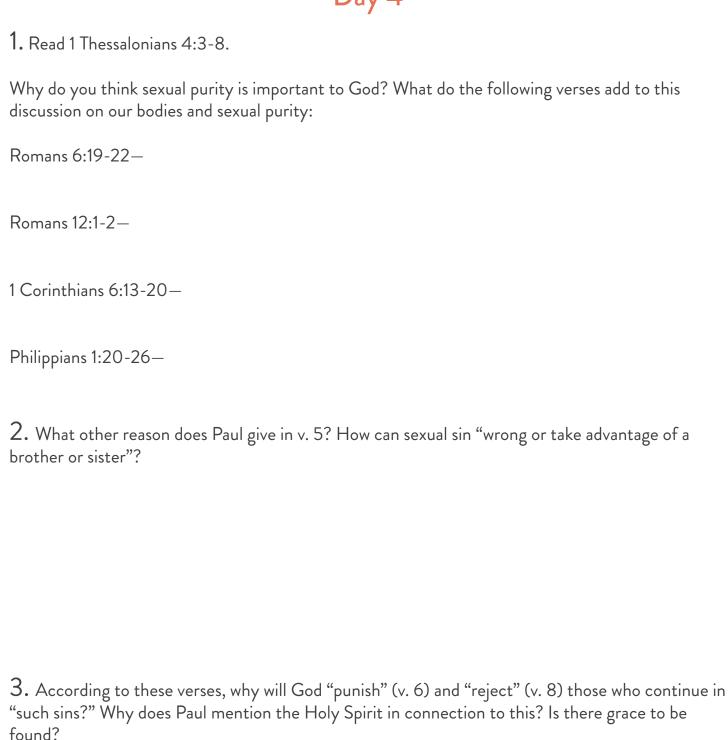
2. What do the phrases "do this more and more" (see also v. 10) tell you about Paul's primary purpose in writing these words of instruction to the Thessalonians? What does it also tell us about how the Thessalonians are currently living?
3. What are some things in your life Paul might encourage you to "do this more and more"? What would it look like to do that?
Day 3
1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.
Before reading the note below, how would you define the word "sanctified?" Now read the note and answer: why would this be God's will for us?
<b>Sanctified</b> — This word simply means "set apart as holy to the Lord." As believers, Paul reminds us we were "bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20) and are now "set apart" for Him and His mission in this world.

Sexual immorality—This translation comes from the Greek word porneia. Sexual standards were very low in the Roman Empire and Jews and early Christians. New Testament writers used this word to describe all the sexual practices that were forbidden in the Bible, including premarital and extramarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and pornography. God created sex for procreation and pleasure and as an expression of love in a binding covenant relationship between a husband and wife, and living this is still one way we can be "set apart" today.

2. A lot of people want to know "God's will" for their lives. How does v. 3 answer this, at least when it comes to use of a Christian's body?

3. What other areas of the way we treat our bodies might be important to God? How would you back your answer up?

## Day 4



4				
П	Read	1 Thessa	lonians	4.7-8

What do you picture when you hear the word "holy"? Is it similar to the definition below or different? How would you describe "living a holy life?"

Live a holy life—This certainly does not mean living a life of perfection but is a reminder back to v. 3 that we be sanctified. In other words, live in such a way that you are "set apart" as holy, and this area is one way to do that. As one author says, "Sanctification is the very air the Christian breathes." I love that!

- 2. Challenge Question: We find ourselves in a similarly oversexualized culture as the early Christians did in the Roman Empire today where words like "abstain" (v. 3) and "control" (v. 4) sound prudish and even intolerant to many. So, considering this, imagine having this conversation with someone and answer the following questions:
- a. In what ways might our culture misunderstand the Bible's sexual ethic?

b. How is God's design for sexuality both counterculturally beautiful and counterintuitively freeing as it was in the 1st century?

<ul> <li>a. Do I need to make any decisions regarding the movies, magazines, web sites, and television shows that are a part of my life?</li> <li>b. Do I need to deal with any improper relationships in view of what God's will is for my life (see 4:3)?</li> <li>c. Are there any activities I need to stop that are prompting lust in my life?</li> <li>d. Where can I get support or help to "live in such a way that is holy and honorable?"</li> <li>e. When will I get this help or make any necessary changes?</li> </ul>	3. Spend time in prayer as you answer the following questions as we wrap up this section (Note: This may not be a question to discuss in Life Groups)
<ul><li>4:3)?</li><li>c. Are there any activities I need to stop that are prompting lust in my life?</li><li>d. Where can I get support or help to "live in such a way that is holy and honorable?"</li></ul>	
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	c. Are there any activities I need to stop that are prompting lust in my life?
e. When will I get this help or make any necessary changes?	d. Where can I get support or help to "live in such a way that is holy and honorable?"
	e. When will I get this help or make any necessary changes?

## Week Five Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 this week? Why do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

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