



PEOPLE OF HOPE

a study in
1 THESSALONIANS
study guide | part two

Dear Cherry Hills family,

This study is an attempt for us to move deeper into our vision as a church, which is: 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 this very book: “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



1 **THESSALONIANS**

an introduction to

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, of course is, writing a letter to a church he planted, so he speaks to this church with great concern 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.



week six

1 THESSALONIANS

4:9-12

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

Day 1

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12.

Look up the phrase “love one another” on www.biblegateway.com. How many times is this phrase mentioned in the New Testament? Take time to read all of them and make a note of what they say:

Love for one another (4:9). This is a translation of the Greek word *philadelphia*, a word that—in non-religious contexts—was used to refer to the mutual love of the children of the same father. As NavPress explains, “In the first century, believing in Christ often resulted in the rupturing of family ties. But as Christians, they became part of a new family (the heavenly Father’s); hence, they became brothers and sisters of all who believed.”

Day 2

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10.

What do you think Paul means when he says that the Thessalonians have been “taught by God to love each other?”

2. Read over your notes from yesterday on what the New Testament says about loving one another then write a paragraph below summarizing this teaching:

3. The word love here means an ongoing activity. What does this kind of love look like in practice in the local church? What does it look like beyond the local church (see v. 10)? How can you “do so more and more?”

Day 3

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

What is Paul's "evangelism strategy" here? Explain it in your own words.

Quiet (4:11)—Literally, "undisturbed, settled, restful."

2. Why do you think this would be Paul's strategy for this church? Do you agree or disagree with it?

3. How can we live a "quiet" life (make sure you refer to the definition) but still share the hope we have in Jesus with others? What would be the opposite of this?

Day 4

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

What is Paul's view of work? Read Acts 18:1-4. How did Paul back-up his view of work in his own life?

2. What is your view of your work? How could it be shaped to be more like Paul's view?

3. One of the biggest problems in the church of Thessalonica was many of the believers became idle and depended on others for handouts because they believed Jesus was returning any day and saw this as an act of faith. What do vv. 11-12 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 suggest about this?

Day 5

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12.

Paul suggests one of the ways the Thessalonians could “win the respect of outsiders” was through living a quiet life and working hard. What are some other ways today we could do this?

2. What do the following verses say about how we are to act toward “outsiders”?

Colossians 4:5-6—

1 Timothy 3:7—

1 Peter 3:15-16—

3. Are you being effective in the way you relate to “outsiders”? How do you know? How can this week’s study help you to do so more?

Week Six Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 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!

week seven

1 THESSALONIANS

4:13-18

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

Day 1

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

What questions do you have as you read this text? What most captures your heart/attention?

Sleep in death (4:13)—Sleep is a common figure of speech for death in the New Testament (see John 11:11).

2. What question is Paul answering in v. 13? Does this mean Christians should not grieve? Why or why not? Read John 11:32-36. What does Jesus' grieving teach us about this?

3. How can a Christian's grief differ from the grief of others who might suffer?

Who have no hope (4:13)—As NavPress explains, “Inscriptions on ancient tombs reveal that people of the first century viewed death with horror and dread. Some religions and philosophies taught that the soul was immortal and longed to be freed from the body at death, but most said souls of the dead lived in a shadowy underworld. No one looked forward to that underworld state, and religions that promised ways to escape it were becoming increasingly popular in Paul's time.”

Day 2

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.

Paul indicates that when a Christian dies, his body “sleeps” until Christ returns to earth. This raises the question: Where does the Christian's spirit go when this happens? Read 2 Corinthians 5:8 and Philippians 1:23-24 and summarize your findings.

2. What is Paul's basis of assurance and hope that departed believers are now with the Lord and will come back with Him when He returns?

3. What do the following verses say about the importance of Christ's resurrection?

1 Corinthians 15:12-22—

Acts 17:31—

Romans 1:1-4—

Romans 4:25—

2 Corinthians 4:14—

Ephesians 1:19-22—

Hebrews 4:14-16—

4. In your own words summarize the importance of the resurrection for the Christian:

Day 3

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.

While Christians have often disagreed about what events will lead up to the return of Christ, there has been less disagreement about what will happen once Christ does return. In your own words, write out the five steps of the events surrounding Christ's return according to verses 16-17:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Trumpet call (4:16)— Trumpets are often used in the Bible as signs of gathering, of warning, or of taking a new step (see Isaiah 27:13; Joel 2:1; Zechariah 9:14). The ancients used trumpets to call armies to assemble in order to prepare for a forward march.

Clouds (4:17)— Clouds are often mentioned in connection with the presence of God (see Exodus 13:21; 19:16; Ezekiel 10:3-4) and the second coming of Christ (see Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7).

Caught up (4:17)—The Greek word literally means “seized up suddenly.” Elsewhere it is used to describe how the Spirit caught up Philip near Gaza and brought him to Caesarea (Acts 8:39) and to describe Paul’s experience of being caught up into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). It wasn’t until the 1830’s that the word “rapture,” based on the Latin word *rapio*, was used to describe this event as “the Rapture.”

2. What three sounds will initiate Christ's return? What do you think the significance is of each?

3. Does Paul tell the Thessalonians when these events will occur? Why or why not? Why do you think Christians spend so much time on the when question? Do you find that to be helpful or not?

4. What was the ultimate purpose of Paul writing these words (see v. 18)? What would it look like for you to focus on that more?

Day 4

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

It's easy to get caught up in all the details of Christ's return but let's not miss the main promise: what is the most amazing promise Paul offers in these verses? How can you live for that?

2. When Paul writes about this event in other places, he tells us that Christians will be resurrected in new bodies. What do you learn about the nature of a resurrected body from 1 Corinthians 15:35-55?

3. What do you think this "spiritual body" is like? How might it differ from a "disembodied spirit" or the body we have now? What does Luke 24:36-43 and John 20:19-28 add to this?

Day 5

1. Summarize what you've learned from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 this week below.

2. What other questions do you still have about this passage?

3. In my opinion (Steve), the most important question to answer this week is: what difference does this guarantee of the Lord's return for His people, living and dead, make to you in your day-to-day life?

Week Seven Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 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!



week eight

1 THESSALONIANS

5:1-11

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

Day 1

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 several times.

How is this passage a continuation of 4:13-18? What is similar and what is different?

2. Before reading the note below, how would you explain the Day of the Lord based on what you already know about it?

Day of the Lord (5:2)— According to Thomas L. Constable, “The day of the Lord is a future period of time in which God will be at work in world affairs more directly and dramatically than He has been since the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.” This extended “day” includes the second coming of Jesus, the events described in 4:13-18, as well as judgment for those who reject Christ.

3. “The Day of the Lord” is a hugely important concept in the Bible. What do the following verses say about it?

Isaiah 2:12—

Isaiah 13:6,9—

Ezekiel 13:5—

Ezekiel 30:3—

Joel 1:14—

Amos 5:18—

Zephaniah 1:7, 14—

Acts 2:20—

2 Thessalonians 2:2—

2 Peter 3:10—

Day 2

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2.

Even though Paul already explained that Jesus would come “like a thief in the night,” they still want to know when it would happen. Why do you think this is?

2. Jesus speaks of this Day most thoroughly in Matthew 24. Read the entire chapter and answer the following questions:

a. What most stands out to you in Jesus’ word?

b. What questions does it evoke?

c. What does Jesus say about trying to forecast His return in Matthew 24:36?

d. How does Jesus say we should live considering our ignorance about when He will come (see especially Matthew 24:42-44)? What would this look like practically for you?

Day 3

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

Why do the pronouns change from “you” and “we” in vv.1-2 to “they” and “them” in v. 3? Who does this refer to?

Destruction (5:3)—As Ron Rhodes rightly notes, “This refers not to annihilation, but to the breaking up of their peace and security by God’s direct intervention via judgment.”

2. Why do you think they are saying “peace and safety” when danger is so near?

3. What image does Paul use in this verse? What does that image stir in you? What do the following verses add to this image?

Isaiah 13:8—

Jeremiah 4:31—

Hosea 13:13—

Matthew 24:8—

Galatians 4:19—

Day 4

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11.

Why aren't the Thessalonians in darkness? How does Paul describe those who are?

Children of the light (5:5)—In Jewish thought, to be a “child” of something means to be characterized by that particular thing.

Asleep (5:6)—Unlike in 4:13, this word means “spiritual lethargy or apathy.” This, according to Paul, is the condition of all those who are unsaved.

2. How does a child of light behave according to these verses? How does Ephesians 5:8-20 add to this idea?

3. Read the following verses and answer: what kind of lifestyle does God want us to have as we wait for the Lord's coming?

1 Corinthians 1:7—

Titus 2:12—

Hebrews 9:28—

1 Peter 1:13, 4:7— 2

Peter 3:11-12—

Day 5

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11.

What imagery does Paul use for what it looks like for us to be “sober”? What “fruit” does he connect this to? How can these three things protect us in times of trials before Jesus comes? What does it look like for you to practically put these three on?

2. Read Romans 6:7, 13:12, 2 Corinthians 10:4 and Ephesians 6:10-18.

Why do you think Paul uses so much military imagery to describe the Christian life? How is this helpful or unhelpful to you?

3. How do you feel about v. 9? How do you think the Thessalonians felt?

4. How does 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 “encourage & “build [you] up” (v. 11) as Paul hopes it will?

Week Eight Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 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!

week nine

1 THESSALONIANS

5:12-15

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.
Note: Paul ends this letter with a series of quick instructions that we will take time to unpack for the next 3 weeks.

Day 1

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 several times and make a list of the issues Paul addresses in this section.
2. Considering this church only existed for about one year, why do you think Paul needed to address concerns about leadership? What qualifications would these leaders need to have according to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9?

Those (5:12)— Probably refers to elders of the church appointed by Paul, as in Acts 14:23. That Paul uses the plural (“those”) indicates that there was more than one elder in the Thessalonian church, as was true in other churches to whom Paul wrote (see Philippians 1:1).

3. What would it look like “to acknowledge” and “hold in the highest regard” those who lead practically? Is there a way you could do that this week?

Day 2

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:2b.

Is this a suggestion or a command? Why would this be so important to Paul?

Live in peace (5:13)—Ron Rhodes once again notes, “This is not a mere exhortation, but an authoritative command from Paul. It is not something open to negotiation. Paul orders them to live in peace.”

2. How would you define “peace”? Does it mean the absence of disagreement? If not, what does it mean?

3. How do the following verses give a fuller meaning and reasoning of what it means to live in peace and why God wants us to live in peace?

2 Corinthians 13:11—

2 Timothy 2:1-4—

Hebrews 12:14-15—

4. Who might you need to “live at peace” with? How can you go about that this week?

Day 3

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

As mentioned in week 6 in 1 Thessalonians 4:11, idleness was a major problem in this church. Read the explanation of idle below and comment on why this might be a big deal to Paul.

Idle (5:14)—According to Leon Morris, “This military word originally referred to a soldier who was out of step or to an army moving about in disarray. The word eventually came to mean “that which is out of order” in a more general sense. It is not idleness in the sense of legitimate leisure that is meant, but loafing. The use of this word makes it quite clear that there were some at Thessalonica who had ceased to work and were imposing on the generosity of others.”

2. How might this instruction be applied in the church today beyond just money? Do you think this is as big of a problem today in the American church as it was in the Thessalonian church? Why or why not?

3. Are you being “idle” when it comes to working for the Kingdom? Why? Where might God be calling you to “work?”

Day 4

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

After warning about idleness, what three quick admonitions does Paul give? Can you give an example of a time someone encouraged you when you were “disheartened”? Why is this important for the church?

2. What does it mean to “help the weak?” What’s the difference between “weak” and “idle”? Who, according to the Bible are “the weak?”

3. How does Romans 14:1-3, 13-23 add to the idea of helping the “weak”? Since Paul is talking about eating certain foods in Romans 14, what would be a practical example of this today?

4. Before reading the definition provided, how would you define “patient?” Now read the definition. How does that enhance your understanding of this word? Who is someone you know who could be described this way? Can you be? Why or why not?

Patient (5:14)— Literally, “strong-tempered.” It carries the idea of being tough and durable with a quiet and steady strength, even in the midst of intense pressure and hardship.

Day 5

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

How is paying “back wrong for wrong” the opposite of patience? Why is it so important for us not to pay back wrong for wrong?

2. What do the following verses say about this?

Romans 12:14-21—

1 Peter 3:9—

Is this difficult for you? Why or why not?

3. What does it mean in practice to do what is good for those who do wrong to us? Should we just pretend it didn't happen?



Week Nine Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 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!



week ten

1 THESSALONIANS

5:16-18

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

Day 1

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

How do you think these verses connect to last week (1 Thessalonians 5:12-15)? How do they connect to the rest of the letter?

2. What do you think Paul is trying to accomplish here as he starts to close this letter?

3. Which of these three is most difficult for you to practice? Why?

Day 2

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16.

Do you think Paul is just using “spiritual” language here or does he really believe we can rejoice always? If he does, what does it practically look like for you to “rejoice always”?

2. Read Acts 16:16-34.

How does Paul model this command to “rejoice always”? How easy is it for you to rejoice while suffering? Why do you think that is?

3. What is the difference between happiness and joy? Are you joyful? Why do you think you answered the way you did?

Day 3

1. Today all I want you to do is a word study on the words “rejoice,” “rejoicing” and “joy” (www.biblegateway.com is a great resource for this) and write down what you learn about living joyfully. At the end, write a couple of sentences summarizing your findings.

Day 4

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

How does a person pray continually? Describe what you think that looks like.

Continually (5:17)— This word was used in the Greek world to refer to the lingering persistency of a hacking cough. As Charles Ryrie explains, “Just as a person with a hacking cough is not always audibly coughing though the tendency to cough is always there, so the Christian who prays without ceasing is not always praying audibly and yet prayer is always the attitude of his heart and life.”

2. What’s the connection between rejoicing and prayer? How much time do you spend rejoicing in your prayer life? Why might it be important?

3. **Challenge:** Set some sort of reminder today to practice “praying continually.” Ideas might be setting an alarm or put a prompt somewhere you look regularly.

Day 5

1. How did yesterday's exercise to "pray continually" go? What did you notice?

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

What does this verse say? What does this verse not say? How does Romans 8:28 give further insight into this?

3. What keeps you from having a grateful attitude?

4. Does it surprise you that Paul says these things are “God’s will” for you? Why or why not?

Week Ten Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 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!

week eleven

1 THESSALONIANS

5:19-28

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

Day 1

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.

Paul lists five commands in quick succession. List them below and note whether they are positive or negative and any questions you may have about them.

2. How is the Holy Spirit described in Matthew 3:11 and Acts 2:3-4? What does this tell you about the Holy Spirit? Based on what Paul has addressed in this letter (and these verses), what might be some things that could quench the Holy Spirit?

Quench the Spirit (5:19)—Ron Rhodes notes, “Paul apparently wanted the Thessalonians to stop certain activities they were presently engaged in so the ministry of the Holy Spirit among them would be unhindered.”

3. Are there any areas in your life that you may be quenching the fire of the Holy Spirit? If so, what do you need to do?

Day 2

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.

Do you believe Paul's instruction about testing prophecies instead of treating them with contempt applies still today? If so, how? If not, why not?

Prophecies (5:20)— The gift of prophecy was the ability to receive and communicate direct revelations from God (see 1 Corinthians 13:8). These sometimes occur with future events, but most often are a word about the present situation (see Acts 13:2).

2. How do we test prophecies today? What do the following verses say about this?

Acts 17:11—

1 Corinthians 12:3—

1 John 4:1-3—

3. What might be a present-day example of a prophecy that needs to be tested? Why might a person be quick to accept a prophecy? Why might a person be quick to show contempt (see definition) towards prophecy?

Contempt (5:20)—Literally, “to make absolutely nothing of.”

Day 3

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.

What request does Paul make twice in this prayer? Why is it important for us to keep ourselves holy for Christ's return?

Spirit, soul and body (5:23)—This is not so much talking about the distinct parts of a person but of our “whole” selves. It's simply Paul's way of saying that we cannot separate our lives into compartments and obey in some areas but ignore other areas. The Lord loves and cares for our whole person.

2. What is our role in sanctification? What is God's role? What does Philippians 2:12-13 add to this? How would you explain this in your own words?

3. Have you ever compartmentalized your “spiritual” life from the rest of your life? Why does Paul warn against this? What does Jesus say about this in Matthew 22:37? Is there any area of your life you need to give over to sanctification?

Day 4

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

What does it mean to you to call God “the God of peace?” Do you know Him in that way?

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:25-26.

Remember, this is a letter that would have been read out-loud to the whole church. How would you have felt after hearing this read?

3. What word of encouragement does this letter end with? How is it similar to how he started it (1:1)? What does that tell you?

Holy kiss (5:26)— It was a common custom in most nations for people to kiss each other at meeting or parting to display their love, sincere affection, and friendship for each other. In New Testament times, the holy kiss was a sign of greeting, much like the modern handshake. For Christians, it further expressed brotherly love and unity. The holy kiss was especially precious to the new believers during the early church years, because they were often outcasts from their own families because of their new faith. Even more powerfully, the holy kiss between the Jewish and Gentile believers was done in recognition that all believers are brothers and sisters in the family of God. Needless to say, there is nothing impure about this!

Day 5 & Conclusion

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5:26 one more time and answer the following:

1. What are the most important lessons you've learned as you've studied this letter? Take your time as you reflect on this.

2. What has changed in your life because of this letter? What might still need change?

3. What questions do you still have about this letter?

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notes & reflections



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life together