

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Dig Deeper Study Tools

Author's Purpose
Context
Structure
Linking Words
Parallels
Narrator's Comment
Vocabulary
Translations
Tone and Feel
Repetition
Quotation/Allusion
Genre
Copycat
Bible Timeline
"Who am I"
"So What"

1 Thessalonians – The Gospel-Centred Church

Sermon Series

18 October; 01, 08 November 2026

15, 22 November 2026

November Study 1

November Study 2

1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

BIBLE PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is most likely the earliest letter we have from Paul, and you can read the book of Acts chapter 17 to get the back story. Paul and his coworker Silas went to the ancient Greek city of Thessaloniki (or Thessalonica). After just one month of telling people the good news, a large number of both Jewish and Greek people gave their allegiance to Jesus and formed the first church community there. But trouble was brewing as Paul's announcement of the risen Jesus as the true Lord led to local opposition. The Christians in Thessaloniki were accused of defying Caesar, the Roman emperor, by "saying that there's another king, Jesus" ([Acts 17:7](#)). This led to persecution that became so intense that Paul and Silas were forced to flee from Thessaloniki. This was a doubly painful tragedy as they loved the people there.

This letter is Paul's attempt to reconnect with them after receiving a report from Timothy that the Thessalonian Christians were doing more than okay—they were flourishing despite intense persecution.

This letter was written with two main movements. The first section celebrates their faithfulness ([1 Thess. 1-3](#)), while the other section is a challenge to keep growing as followers of Jesus ([1 Thess. 4-6](#)). These two larger sections are surrounded by three prayers. The letter opens with a thanksgiving prayer in 1:1-5, with the two movements linked together by a transitional prayer in 3:11-13, and then the letter concludes with a final prayer in 5:23-28.

The Big Idea

Giving allegiance to Jesus as King leads to a countercultural and holy way of life, which can also generate suspicion and conflict. Jesus' followers should respond to such hostility with love, meeting opposition with grace, forgiveness, and generosity.

[from bibleproject.com]

Outline of 1 Thessalonians – The Gospel-Centred Church (with preaching schedule)

<i>BFA</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Text</i>
Oct Study 1	28 Sep	Gospel Transformation 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
Oct Study 2	04 Oct	Gospel Integrity 1 Thess 2:1-16
	11 Oct	Gospel Servanthood 1 Thess 2:17-3:13
Nov Study 1	18 Oct	Gospel Living – Pleasing God 1 Thess 4:1-2
	25 Oct	ORPC ANNIVERSARY Romans 1:16-17
	01 Nov	Gospel Living – Work & Sexuality 1 Thess 4:3-12
	08 Nov	Gospel Hope 1 Thess 4:13-18
Nov Study 2	15 Nov	Gospel Expectation 1 Thess 5:1-11
	22 Nov	Gospel Holiness 1 Thess 5:12-28

PURPOSE OF DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Discipleship groups are meant to help people grow spiritually in community.

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP OBJECTIVES

Categories	Objectives
Build Community	Build friendships and community life on a deeper level and guide people to serve one another
Strengthen faith through study and application	Encourage people to grow by the study and application of God's word. Hold each other accountable
Help navigate life challenges	Minister to people of various life-stages and challenges
Offer support and encouragement	Discipleship group members offer support, care, and pray for one another
Outreach	Reach out or connect with those who are not part of a discipleship group

INDICATORS OF GROUP HEALTH

- Members know why the group exists and what is most important to the group
- Members consistently attend and demonstrate dedication to the group
- Members share ownership and responsibility for the sustainability of the group
- Members feel free to engage in authentic conversation and reflection on faith and life
- Members take care of each other
- Members feel free to invite others to join

18 October; 01, 08 November 2026

November Study 1

1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): REFLECT

Read the text throughout the week(s) before your group time.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

Living to Please God

⁴ As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

³ It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

⁸ Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

⁹ Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

¹⁰ And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, ¹¹ and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹² so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Believers Who Have Died

¹³ Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Notes and Questions

Paul's Greco-Roman world generally accepted sexual promiscuity, especially among men, and viewed sexual behaviour in terms of social honour rather than holiness. The Thessalonians came from this culture.

Greek patronage system – patrons fund the clients who would publicly honour and support the patron.

PREPARE TO SHARE (INDIVIDUAL): LOOK BACK

What has God been teaching you in the last few weeks?

Who has God laid on your heart to pray for?

GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

GROUP: STUDY 1

Paul has previously given instructions to the Thessalonians on how to live in order to please God. These instructions came with the example of the missionaries' lives (see 1 Thess 1:6). The Thessalonians were taught that holy lives look different from society's norm – part of living holy lives included sharing in suffering (1 Thess 2:14-16).

1. Paul begins by exhorting the Thessalonians to “live in order to please God”. What do you think it means to live with the aim of pleasing God?

2. Why is this different from living according to the law of Moses? How is it different, other than that the specific laws are different?

We know that the Thessalonians had done well in imitating the missionaries and were in obedience to the instructions given (1 Thess 4:1). However, they needed reinforcement in a few areas – specifically here in sexual purity (1 Thess 4:3-8), and in brotherly love (1 Thess 4:9-12).

3. Sanctification as God's will is stated as the reason for the Thessalonians to avoid sexual immorality.
 - a. What is sexual immorality? What does this have to do with sanctification?

 - b. What does avoiding sexual immorality (pursuing sexual purity) look like in today's context? What challenges do we face in this?

c. Paul gives three reasons for avoiding sexual immorality, framing it with the Trinity. What are these three reasons?

d. What does 1 Thess 4:8 tell us about the consequences of persisting in sexual immorality? Why is this the consequence?

4. Paul commends the Thessalonians in their love for each other, specifically pointing out their love for God's family in Macedonia. Yet he finds that it is necessary to remind them of the need to love each other more and more. Why do you think this is the case? (See 1 Thess 4:11-12).

5. How can you tell if the members of a church genuinely love one another? Conversely, what happens when love is absent?

6. In 1 Thess 4:12, Paul says that decisions we may consider as “personal” for each individual believer in fact has implications for the whole community. Choosing to live in dependence on a patron (as with the rest of Thessalonian society) was not an act of brotherly love, neither was it a good testimony to non-believers. What decisions might we consider “personal”? How would these impact the community of Christian brothers and sisters?

Read 1 Thess 4:13-18.

There is a distinct difference between how non-Christians and Christians view death. Death, for Christians, is not final – we expect to meet again, as we are, with full knowledge of who we are (distinctly different from reincarnation), together with the Lord at His return.

7. Paul grounds his teaching in 1 Thess 4:13-18 in two key doctrines. What are they? Why do these two doctrines give us hope?

8. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, we are reassured that those who have fallen asleep (died) in the Lord will not be left out of Christ’s return. They will be publicly vindicated in their faith together with the living believers at Christ’s return. Paul tells the Thessalonians to encourage each other with these words. In what ways is this encouraging to you?

9. What does 1 Thess 4:13-18 tell us about the composition of the one holy catholic church? Why is this important to us? (Consider also what this means for brotherly love as in 1 Thess 4:9-12.)
10. Take some time to reflect on what we have just read and talked about.
- a. Summarise 1 Thessalonians 4 in one sentence.
 - b. What is one major application in your life today from 1 Thessalonians 4?

15, 22 November 2026

November Study 2

1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): REFLECT

1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

The Day of the Lord

5 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

⁴ But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Final Instructions

¹² Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil.

²³ 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. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

Notes and Questions

Cf. Matt 25:1-13

Consider Jer 6:14. Also, at this time, coins, monuments, official inscriptions, and writings vigorously promoted the ideas of Roman peace (Pax Romana) and to a lesser extent safety

In Hebrew idiom, being said to be "children of" a specific quality meant to be characterised by that quality.

Armour: consider Is 59:17, also Eph 6:10-18

At the time people with wealth (who were considered patrons) were respected and considered leaders, in contrast to what Paul is saying.

²⁵ Brothers and sisters, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

PREPARE TO SHARE (INDIVIDUAL): LOOK BACK

What has God been teaching you in the last few weeks?

Who has God laid on your heart to pray for?

GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

Read 1 Thess 5:1-11.

1. Paul uses the analogies of “a thief in the night” and “labour pains on a pregnant woman” to describe the coming of the Day of the Lord. What does this tell you about what the coming of the day of the Lord is like?

- b. What does being children of the day/light mean for our lives in the present?

Read 1 Thess 5:12-22.

Here, we see Paul instructing the Thessalonian believers on what it looks like concretely for them as a community to live in light of the coming Day of the Lord.

3. First Thess 5:12-15 speaks about preparing for the Day of the Lord with right intra-community relationships.
 - a. Verses 12-13 speak about acknowledging/respecting and loving congregational leaders. What does Paul identify as the basis for honouring these leaders?

 - b. What does it look like for us to acknowledge/respect and love our congregational leaders today in the way that Paul describes?

4. Notice how Paul addresses different kinds of people and problems within the church: leaders, the idle/unruly, the discouraged, the weak, and those who do wrong. What does this range of instructions tell us about the kind of community Paul wants the Thessalonians to be?

5. Paul tells the Thessalonian believers to do what is good for each other (as in vv.13-14) but also extends this to “everyone else.”
 - a. Why do you think this is important for a church preparing for the Day of the Lord?
 - b. Think of a difficult relationship or conflict: what would it look like to seek the other person’s good rather than simply seeking to get even?
6. In 1 Thess 5:16-22, Paul tells the Thessalonians what it means to stay close to God as part of their preparation for the coming Day of the Lord.
 - a. Why do you think it is important (in fact, God’s will for us in Christ Jesus) for Christians to rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances?
 - b. Paul tells the Thessalonians both “do not quench the Spirit” and “test everything.” What principle does this give us for responding to claims of spiritual guidance today?

7. In vv.23-24, after giving many instructions, Paul states his confidence that God himself will sanctify and preserve the Thessalonians. What does this reveal about God's role and our role in living Christian lives?
8. Look at the whole passage again. Paul begins with the coming Day of the Lord (vv.1-11) and ends by assuring them that God is faithful (vv.23-24). What is one concrete change God is calling us as a community to make in how we live together, in light of what this passage teaches us about Christ's return and God's faithfulness?
9. Take some time to reflect on what we have just read and talked about.
 - a. Summarise 1 Thessalonians 5 in one sentence.
 - b. What is one major application in your life today from 1 Thessalonians 5?

1 THESSALONIANS

Pick the correct answer and shade the corresponding square on the grid at the end.

Questions

1. Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians' work produced by faith, labour prompted by love, and what else?

- A. Peace (B2)
 - B. Patience (G7)
 - C. Hope (D1)
 - D. Joy (C6)
-

2. The Thessalonians turned to God from what?

- A. Persecution (F7)
 - B. Idols (D2)
 - C. False teachers (B1)
 - D. Roman rule (E3)
-

3. The Thessalonians became an example to believers in which two regions?

- A. Macedonia and Achaia (B5)
 - B. Galatia and Phrygia (C3)
 - C. Judea and Samaria (E6)
 - D. Rome and Corinth (A1)
-

4. Paul says the gospel came to the Thessalonians not simply with words, but with what?

- A. Signs and wonders (A4)
 - B. Power, the Holy Spirit and deep conviction (C5)
 - C. Wisdom and knowledge (E2)
 - D. Miracles and healing (G6)
-

5. Paul compares his care for the Thessalonians to that of what kind of mother?

- A. A teaching mother (E7)
 - B. A protective mother (C2)
 - C. A nursing mother (D5)
 - D. A praying mother (A5)
-

6. When Timothy returned from Thessalonica, what did Paul especially want to hear about?

- A. Their finances (F8)
 - B. Their numbers (B7)
 - C. Their worship (C1)
 - D. Their faith and love (E5)
-

7. What did Paul pray would increase and overflow among the Thessalonians?

- A. Knowledge (G1)
 - B. Love (F5)
 - C. Wealth (D8)
 - D. Influence (A2)
-

8. What does Paul say is God's will for believers in relation to sexual morality?

- A. Their sanctification (D4)
 - B. Their happiness (C8)
 - C. Their freedom (B3)
 - D. Their success (E4)
-

9. What will happen to believers who have died when Christ returns?

- A. They will remain in the grave until later (G8)
 - B. They will become angels (F4)
 - C. They will rise and be with Christ (D3)
 - D. They will return to earth first (C4)
-

10. Paul says the Day of the Lord will come like what?

- A. A storm (B8)
 - B. A thief in the night (D6)
 - C. A trumpet blast (A7)
 - D. A king entering his city (G5)
-

11. At the end of the letter, what does Paul say about God?

- A. God is powerful (A6)
 - B. God is merciful (B4)
 - C. God is patient (C7)
 - D. God is faithful, and he will do it (D7)
-

