



DEEPER PRAYER

Anglican Diocese of Bunbury 2022

NRSV Version

Deeper Prayer

Learning from St Paul

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Printed copies of 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Visual Summaries of 1 and 2 Thessalonians produced by The Bible Project

Bibliography

“Unlocking the Bible”, by David Pawson

“Pray Continually” – Lecture by Andrew Malone, Ridley College

‘The Bible Background Commentary: New Testament’ by Craig S Keener

gotquestions.org – Church at Thessalonica

thebibleproject.com – 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Author: Verity Murray

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Introduction

“Deeper Prayer: Learning from Paul” has been specially written for the Diocese of Bunbury’s strategy to grow and deepen our prayer lives. The course can be used at any time of the year, either in a small group, or by individuals. It can also be used as a focus for prayer during Lent. Lent is a time traditionally used for self-examination and developing spiritual practices in preparation for Easter. These studies will lead to self-examination as well as prayer for others, since we cannot pray things for others that we are not also praying for ourselves.

The course runs for 9 weeks, while Lent lasts for 6 weeks. If you wish to condense the studies to 6 weeks, it is recommended that you study Week 1 and then the 5 most pertinent studies for yourself or, if you are doing the studies in a group, the ones most pertinent for your context. Alternatively, you could start the studies 3 weeks before Lent begins.

The studies focus on the two **Letters to the Thessalonians**. Many of the themes for prayer in these letters are taken up elsewhere in the Bible, but for the sake of simplicity, cross references to other Bible passages have generally not been used. Neither do the studies follow the letters chapter by chapter but rather look at how Paul talks about and models prayer. This is to allow for the focus to rest on prayer itself: what we pray for and why, and then to practice deeper prayer.

It is possible that bible study can lead to head knowledge but no real change of heart or practice. In order to grow and deepen our prayer lives, we need to make time to pray -not just in our meetings or devotional times but also throughout the week. At the end of each study, a section of notes, called GO DEEPER, give ideas how to do this and it is important to make time for these.

Paul says more than once in his letters to the Thessalonians that he has been a ‘example’ for them to ‘imitate’ (eg 2 Thess 3v9). It’s clear that Paul did not pray things for the Thessalonians that he was not willing to do himself. As we go through these studies we will realise that we must do the same. It also becomes apparent that sometimes we ourselves might have a part to play in the answers to our prayers for other people. God may want to work through us to bless, encourage and strengthen others. As a result, these study notes not only draw us deeper into prayer, but also draw us deeper into living out our faith, as Paul and the Thessalonians did.

Week 1’s study requires more time than the others. If you are studying in a group you may need to make more time than usual for the study, or consider asking your group members to do Week 1 at home and then start your time together with Week 2.

The appendix includes printed copies of the two letters. You may like to use these to highlight or underline salient points – or even use colour codes for the various themes, which are scattered throughout the letters.

The visual summaries in the appendix come from the Bible Project and may need to be printed on A3 paper for easier reading. They go with the Bible Project’s excellent video summaries on the two letters, which can be found at thebibleproject.com

Week 1 – Introduction to the Letters to the Thessalonians

Thessalonica was a prominent city in Macedonia (in modern-day Greece) in Paul's day, and part of the Roman Empire. It was a bustling port on the Aegean Sea and a principal stop on the Ignatian Way, a major Roman road. Its population was mainly a mix of Greeks, Romans and Jews. Paul and Silas travelled to Thessalonica from Philippi on Paul's second missionary journey to preach the good news about Jesus. They spent three weeks teaching in the Jewish synagogue, but most of the Thessalonian Jews became indignant and formed a mob to drive the men out of the city. However, "some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women" (Acts 17:4). That was the beginning of the church at Thessalonica.

Due to the short time he had spent in Thessalonica, Paul was concerned about the church there. He tried to return to them "again and again—but Satan blocked our way" (1 Thessalonians 2:18), so while Paul was in Corinth with his companions Silas and Timothy, he wrote two letters to them, letters now called 1 and 2 Thessalonians. They are believed to be the first New Testament letters that Paul wrote (about AD50)

Why use these letters to learn about prayer?

- Although these letters are relatively short, they contain much about prayer. Paul talks about prayer in four out of 5 chapters in the first letter and all three chapters of the second letter.
- Paul models prayer for the believers in these letters. He tells them what he prays about, peppers his teaching points with prayer and asks the Thessalonians to pray for him. Paul was teaching the new believers about prayer as well as doctrine.
- Paul was addressing ordinary people like us. Although there is a cultural gap to bridge, the humanity of the letters make them easy to relate to. If Paul were here today he would probably pray the same things for us.
- The letters are very practical and are related to real, every-day life. The issues the early Christians faced are not much different to ours.

Getting Started

Read through the whole of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. You can listen to the letters being read aloud with a Bible App, a Bible CD or via the internet on [biblica.com](https://www.biblica.com)¹. It takes about 10 minutes to read through the first letter and 6 minutes to read the second letter. If you can, **as you read through the letters, highlight or underline the parts about prayer.** This will make it easier to refer back to these verses later. You may like to use a printed copy of the letters (see Appendix).

¹ <https://www.biblica.com/resources/niv-audio-bible-listen-online-for-free/>

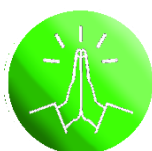
CONSIDER/DISCUSS

1. How would you describe Paul's relationship with the Christians in Thessalonica?

2. Do you have any close relationships with other Christians? Write down here the names of some Christians or Christian groups with whom you have a special connection. (This doesn't necessarily mean a long connection – Paul spent only about three weeks with the Thessalonians and yet within this short time he had made a deep connection with them).

3. From the list of names or groups of people you have written in your answer to Q3, choose at least one that you would like to commit to pray for over the course of this study. Write their name/names here:

We will be focusing our learning on how to pray for other Christians (including ourselves), so it is best to choose someone to pray for who is already a Christian.



Use the prayer below or pray in your own words for that person/s and for yourself as you begin these studies.

Heavenly Father, thank you for _____ (name/s). Thank you for their faith and love for you and for me. I want to commit myself to praying for _____, particularly over the next few weeks. Please give me grace to keep to that commitment so that _____ (name/s) will be blessed through my prayers and that I will grow and deepen in my prayer life too. In Jesus name, Amen

GO DEEPER

If you have time, watch the short overview videos on 1 and 2 Thessalonians produced by the Bible Project on the internet (via YouTube or thebibleproject.com) or study the printed visuals of these overviews in the Appendix, looking out particularly for references to prayer.

Week 2 – Pray with Thanks

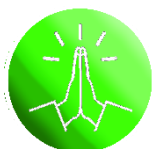
Giving thanks takes up a large proportion of Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians. Andrew Malone, in his lecture on 1 and 2 Thessalonians, suggests that two thirds of Paul’s prayers in these letters are about thanksgiving.

CONSIDER/DISCUSS

1. When you pray for other people what proportion of your prayers are given over to thanks for them? Is this something you have ever thought much about?
2. Read the following passages from the letters. For each passage, write down what Paul was thankful for. If you are working with a group, you may like to share out the bible verses and feedback to each other.

Bible Reference	What Paul was thankful for
1 Thessalonians 1 v 2 and 3	
1 Thessalonians 2 v 13	
1 Thessalonians 3 v 8 and 9	
2 Thessalonians 1 v 3 and 4	
2 Thessalonians 2 v 13	

3. What difference do you think it would make if you prayed like this regularly for others?



If you are doing this study with other people, divide into pairs and pray a prayer of thanks for one another, taking inspiration from Paul. If you are doing this study by yourself, thank God for your own love, faith etc.

4. How does it feel to be prayed for like this? How does it change the way you think about yourself?

GO DEEPER

- Consider the person or people that you have committed to pray for during the course of these studies. What can you see in them that you are thankful to God for?
- Write a prayer in the box below, thanking God for your chosen person or people, mentioning the specific things which encourage and bless you.
- Over the next week, pray with thanks each day for your chosen person/people.
- Consider sending a thank you letter, email or message to your chosen person/people. Paul didn't just tell God how thankful he was for the Thessalonians – he also told them!
- Try to pray more prayers of thanks than asking prayers this week and note what difference this makes



Week 3 – Pray Constantly

In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Paul sets a very high bar for prayer. Paul says he prays “constantly” (1 Thess 1 v2). Three times he says he prays “always” (1 Thess 1 v 1, 2 Thess 2 v 13 and 2 Thess 1 v 11²). Paul also instructs the Thessalonians to pray “without ceasing” (1 Thess 5 v 17). You may like to circle or highlight these words in your copy of the letters and/or read these verses aloud.

How do you respond to this? Does it seem a bit extreme? Or impossible for you to achieve? How can we pray like this in the midst of our busy lives? Paul gives us some clues to how he does this:

A. Paul and his companions prayed “night and day” (1 Thessalonians 3 v 10)

Paul had a day job, making tents and he mentions this in both letters (1 Thess 2 v 9 and 2 Thess 3 v8) , so we know that he was not spending his whole day on his knees. This reference to night and day could be thought of as ‘morning and evening’ – book-ending the day with prayer.

B. Paul peppered his conversation and activities with prayer

- Paul begins and ends his letters with prayer (1 Thess 1 v2/5 v 23, 2 Thess 1v3/3v16).
- Paul weaves prayer into his teaching points, particularly when he is transitioning from one topic to another. This is shown clearly in the visual summaries in the appendix. For Paul, praying came as naturally as talking. He slipped easily and readily from one to the other.


CONSIDER/DISCUSS

1. How often do you pray? Do you have set times when you pray, or do you tend to pray ‘on the hoof’? There is no right or wrong answer to this question. We all have different ways of praying. If you are in a group, share your stories.
2. Paul talks about praying “night and day”. What do you think are the advantages of doing both?
3. Paul peppered his activities with prayer. How do you, or could you, imitate Paul? (e.g. pray in the car as you set off on a journey, or whisper a prayer of “Help!” as you walk into your workplace; pray with thanks when you have arrived safely, or made it through another day at work).
4. Do you weave prayer into your conversations? As you talk about events in the news, or in your family or community life, do you pause and pray? Do you know people who do?
5. Close this study with a prayer, asking the Lord to help you learn how to pray ‘continually’ like Paul.

² New Revised Standard Version of the Bible

GO DEEPER

- How can you weave more prayer into your day, following Paul's example? Jot some ideas in the text box below.



A large empty rectangular box for taking notes, with a green circular icon in the top-left corner depicting a person in a prayer position with rays of light above their head.

- Make a decision to pray for your chosen person/people more often this week, taking some ideas for how to do this from your notes above.
- Try to make a habit of weaving prayer into your daily activities and conversations. If you already do this, try to do it even more.

Recommended resources for learning to weave prayer through the day:

“Liturgy of the Ordinary”, by Tish Harrison Warren

“The Rhythm of Life: Celtic Daily Prayer” by David Adam

“How to Pray Throughout Your Day” talk by Rick Warren on You Tube³

³ https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=rick+warren+how+to+pray+throughout+your+day

Week 4 – Pray for Maturity in Faith

When we pray for others, we tend to pray for things that are of immediate concern. If they are sick, we pray for healing; on holiday, for safe travels; out of work, for employment and so on. These are good and valid things to pray for. Paul, however, shows us how to go deeper with our intercessions for other Christians. This week's study and the following ones show us how to pray with a broader perspective.

Read 1 Thessalonians Chapter 2 v 13 – Chapter 3 v10

Thessalonians 2 v 13 says that the Thessalonians accepted the word of God and, as a result of their faith, God's word is now at work in them. However, this is just the beginning of their faith journey and as we see throughout the letters, Paul was eager to strengthen and encourage them in their faith. He was concerned that persecution and spiritual warfare might derail them and prayed earnestly that he might "restore whatever is lacking" in their faith. Paul did not just pray about this. He also did something about it. Firstly, he sent Timothy to them and then he sent his two letters.

CONSIDER/DISCUSS

1. Where are you in your faith journey? What things might be coming against your own growth to maturity in faith? Is there anything lacking? What could you do about that? Has anyone helped you to grow in maturity in faith? Share your stories.

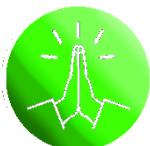
Read 2 Thessalonians 1 v 11 and 12 (see box below)

"We always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith, ¹²so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess 1 v11-12)

CONSIDER/DISCUSS

2. What is Paul praying for here? Make a list

3. Have you ever prayed like this for yourself or for anyone else consistently? (note, Paul says he prays 'constantly' for this).
4. What would you expect to see happen in yourself and others if you prayed like this regularly?



Pray the words below, from 2 Thessalonians 1 v 11-12 aloud, changing the words 'you' and 'your' to 'me/my' or 'us/our' or use a name. If you are in a group, pray for each other in pairs.

"I always pray for _____, that our God may count _____ worthy of his call and will fulfil by his power every good work and resolve of faith of _____. I pray this so that the name of our lord Jesus may be glorified in _____, and _____ in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess 1 v11-12)

GO DEEPER

- Pray the words of 2 Thessalonians 1 v 11-12 for yourself and your chosen person/people regularly this week. Do you notice anything happening to your own faith as you do this?
- Think about the person/people you have committed to praying for. What might be preventing them growing in faith? Is there anything particular they are lacking? How could you pray about that?
- Consider doing something to help encourage and strengthen the faith of your chosen person/people. eg sending them a bible verse, or sharing a Christian book or video you have enjoyed. If you are not sure what to do, pray for inspiration. The Lord knows exactly what they need and He can use you to bless them. (Note – we are not to try 'fixing' anyone; this is about encouraging and strengthening faith)

Week 5 – Pray for Increasing Love

Love is a major theme in these letters. The words ‘love’ or ‘loved’ are used 13 times altogether – 9 times in the 1st letter and 4 times in the 2nd letter. In the 1st letter Paul prays that the Lord would make them love “increase and abound” in love (Chapter 3 v 12). In the 2nd letter Paul gives thanks that their love for one another is increasing (Chapter 1 v 3). Paul is seeing his prayer answered. But how does he know their love is growing? And how does this process happen?

Read the extracts on p13 and answer the questions below. You may wish to read the questions first and highlight or underline relevant parts as you read.

1. Complete the second column in the table below

From whom have the Thessalonians received love?	How has that love been demonstrated to the Thessalonians?
God	
Paul, Timothy and Silas	

1. How do the Thessalonians show love in return?
2. What commands does Paul give regarding love? (See particularly 1 Thess 5 v 11 and 12)
3. Have *you* received this kind of love from God and from other Christians? How do you share this kind of love with others? Think of specific examples in both cases. Share your stories.



Finish this study by praying the prayer below for yourself and/or for each other, or pray in your own words

“Thank you God that I am loved by you as a precious child and that I can experience your love by the Holy Spirit and through my Christian brothers and sisters. Thank you for those who have shown love to me. Please direct my heart into your love so that my love will increase more and more. May I share my very life with others, encouraging, comforting and urging them on in living out their faith. May I hold Christian leaders in high regard in love, especially those who work hard on my behalf and may I do my part to live at peace with others, through the grace that you give me. In Jesus’ name”. Amen

GO DEEPER

- Try to pray the prayer above for yourself and your chosen person/people every day this week, or write your own prayer.
- Look for evidence of increasing love, especially in yourself.
- Consider how the Lord may wish to use you to model a life of love to your chosen person/people and pray for opportunities to do that

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. **4** For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, **5** because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. **6** And you became imitators of us and of the Lord

Chapter 2

7 though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. **8** So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

9 You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters, we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. **10** You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. **11** As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, **12** urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Chapter 3

6 . But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us—just as we long to see you.

Chapter 4

9 Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; **10** and indeed you do love all the brothers and sisters throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more

Chapter 5

11 Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

12 But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; **13** esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves

2 Thessalonians

Chapter 3

5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God . . .

Week 6 – Pray for Purity

As we have already seen, Paul scatters prayers for the Thessalonian Christians throughout his letters. One of his prayers, and much of Paul’s teaching, focuses on purity:

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Sanctification, in its simplest terms means to free from sin, or to purify. Sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit: we are cleansed from our sin through repentance and our faith in Jesus’ death on the cross on our behalf. Paul assures us that God is faithful and he will do it. However, we also have a part to play in our sanctification. We have a responsibility to free ourselves from the habits of sin in our lives.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4 v 1-12 and 5 v 14-22

Paul shows that sanctification is a process. Chapter 4v3 begins “for this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you . . .” followed by a list of commands. We are forgiven our sins the moment we repent, but to live lives of purity requires certain actions or behaviours on our part.

CONSIDER/DISCUSS

1. Read Paul’s list of Dos and Don’ts below. What stands out to you? Does anything surprise or challenge you?

Dos	Don’ts
Avoid sexual immorality. Control your own body in a way that is holy and honourable	In sexual relationships, don’t do wrong or take advantage of each other. Don’t give into lust or fornication.
Mind your own business	Don’t be a busy body
Work for a living	Don’t make a habit of being financially dependent on others (See also 2 Thess 3 v6-15)
Live a quiet life and mind your own affairs	Don’t be disruptive
Encourage the fainthearted	
Help the weak	
Be patient with everyone	
Strive to do what is good for each other and everyone else	Don’t pay back evil for evil
Rejoice always	
Pray without ceasing	
Give thanks in all circumstances	
Test prophecies: hold fast to what is good and reject every kind of evil	Don’t quench the Spirit. Don’t despise prophecies

2. Have you ever prayed for your own purity and/or the purity of another Christian? Is this something that you feel comfortable doing? Why or why not?

3. Why do you think Paul speaks and prays so urgently about these things and in fact urges the Thessalonians to live like this “more and more” (4 v 1)?

4. Paul says that his own life sets an example for the Thessalonian Christians to follow. (1 Thess 2 v 9-10 and 2 Thess 3 v 7-9). Have you ever considered that your life is a model that other Christians follow and imitate? How might that impact the way you pray for your own purity?



If you are in a group, pray for one another, using the words from Paul’s prayer at the start of the previous page. Encourage one another with the words “The one who calls you is faithful and he will do this!” The Holy Spirit is at work in us to accomplish these things. If you are studying alone, pray for yourself and your chosen person.

GO DEEPER

- Pray Paul’s prayer for purity for yourself and your chosen person/people this week.

- Ask for special grace to grow in purity with regards to any particular ‘Do’ or ‘Don’t’ from Paul’s list (or anything else) that challenges you.

- If an issue persists, ask a trusted friend to pray with you.

Historical and Cultural Context

Idleness was a particular problem for the Thessalonians. Paul addresses this issue in both his letters. One reason for their idleness seems to be their expectation that Jesus was coming back imminently (see Week 8’s study). The Bible Project suggests another possible reason for their lack of willingness to work with their hands could be a cultural practice of the day where wealthy citizens would pay people to run errands for them. Perhaps some of Paul’s new converts were in the habit of making a living this way, which could lead to the behaviour of a ‘busy body’ or meddler—looking to see what is going on, or stirring things up, in order to profit from events in some way. Craig S Keener, in ‘The Bible Background Commentary’ suggests that among the Greeks and Romans at the time there was a disdain for manual labour and some pursued what was called a ‘Cynic’ lifestyle of travelling philosophers. Unlike Paul, Cynics begged rather than worked and with their denunciations of passers-by were certainly ‘meddlers’. Whatever the reason for their idleness, Paul urges his listeners to live worthwhile and productive lives instead.

Week 7 – Pray for Strength to Persevere

Paul prays for the Thessalonians to have the strength to persevere in their faith in the face of opposition:

“And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints”(1 Thess 3 v 13)

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.” (2 Thess 2 v 16-17)

“May the Lord direct your hearts . . . to the steadfastness of Christ.” (2 Thess 3 v 5)

Read 1 Thess 2 v 1 – 20 and 3 v 1-8 – Suffering and Persecution

Paul says that opposition comes from two sources: people who oppose their message and Satan, who is also described as “the tempter”.

CONSIDER/DISCUSS

1. List the ways people and Satan oppose Paul and the Christians in Thessalonica.
2. What does Paul teach about suffering and persecution?
3. We too live in a society which is a melting pot of religions and philosophies; some people strongly oppose our beliefs and Satan still seeks to deceive and discourage. Have you or the people you are praying for experienced opposition from others or temptation to give up on your/their faith?

Keep On Keeping On

Timothy reported that despite opposition, the Thessalonians had held onto their faith. Paul thanks God for their “steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 1 v 3) and in the second letter Paul goes as far as to say “. . . we boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring”. And yet Paul knows that opposition is relentless and that the temptation to give up will always be there. And so he instructs them:

- Encourage one another and build one another up (1 Thess 5 v11)
- Don't let anyone deceive you in anyway (2 Thess 2 v 3)
- Stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us (2 Thess 2 v15)

Paul also encourages them that “The Lord is faithful and he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one”. (2 Thess 3 v3).

CONSIDER/DISCUSS

4. What helps you to keep persevering?



Write a prayer for strength to persevere for yourself and your chosen person/people. If you are studying in a group, break into pairs and use your prayer to pray for each other

GO DEEPER

- Keep praying this week for your chosen person/people to have strength to persevere in their faith.
- Consider if there is anything you can do to encourage and build that person up in the faith.
- Look for ways to build yourself up in the faith – eg through reading Scripture, reading Christian books, listening to Christian teaching and praying with others.

Week 8 – Pray in the Light of the Second Coming

It is impossible to read the letters to the Thessalonians without noticing the frequent references to the second coming of Jesus, or what Paul sometimes refers to as ‘the day of the Lord’ (1 Thess 5 v 2).
Twice Paul prays that the Thessalonians would be

‘blameless . . . at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (1 Thess 3 v13 and 1 Thess 5 v 23).

CONSIDER/DISCUSS

1. How much does the second coming feature in your prayer life? Why do you think that is?

Read 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4 v 13- Chapter 5 v 10

The second coming was of huge concern to the Thessalonians and there was much confusion about it.

CONSIDER/DISCUSS

2. According to Paul, why is the second coming a reason for great hope and encouragement for Christians?
3. The times and dates of the second coming seemed to be of concern to the Thessalonians. What does Paul say about this? (Note, Paul’s teaching mirrors the teaching of Jesus, recorded in Matthew chapter 24)
4. How should our expectation of the second coming affect our behaviour?

In chapter 5 v 6-8 sleep refers to spiritual sleepiness or slumber. Drunkenness is probably a metaphor for the same kind of slumber or ‘not having your wits about you’. Darkness/night and the day/light are used similarly as metaphors.



Write a prayer for yourself and your chosen person/people in the light of the second coming.

GO DEEPER

- Use your prayer about the second coming for yourself and your chosen person/people daily this week if you can.
- Notice what difference it makes to the way you think about and anticipate Jesus' return.

Week 9 – Pray for the Gospel Message

At the end of both letters, Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray for him and his companions. He asks them to

pray *‘that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people’*

‘pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you’. (2 Thessalonians 3 v 1-2)

Paul expects the Thessalonians to be witnesses of the gospel message too. In fact, Paul praises the Thessalonians for the huge impact their witness has already had:

‘ . . .you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹For the people of those regions^[a] report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God’ (1 Thessalonians 1 v 7-9)

Paul also shows that the way we live our daily life is also an important part of our witness. Paul tells the Thessalonians that their daily life should

‘win the respect of outsiders’ (non-Christians) – (1 Thessalonian 4 v 12 – NIV translation)

CONSIDER/DISCUSS

1. Do you pray that the gospel message would spread rapidly and be ‘glorified everywhere’? How much does the spread of the gospel feature in your prayer life?
2. Are you known for your Christian faith among your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours? How about the person/people you are praying for? Are you and/or they actively ‘ringing out the gospel message’? How important do you think this is? How do you/they do this?
3. How does the way you live your life on a day to day basis win the respect of non-Christians? Share your stories and encourage one another. If you are aware of any hypocrisy in yourself (not practising what you preach) take it to the Lord in prayer, or ask someone else to pray for you.



Write a prayer that the gospel would spread rapidly and be glorified through your witness and the witness of your chosen person/people. If you are in a group, break into prayers and pray for each other.

GO DEEPER

- Pray every day this week for yourself and your chosen person/people that you would be known for your faith and that your daily life would win the respect of non-Christians. Pray for the gospel to spread rapidly and be honoured.
- Note how this prayer affects the way you live this week. Are you more aware of opportunities to share your faith? Are you more aware that how you live witnesses Christ's life in you to others?
- Has the person you are praying for, or someone else, been a significant influence on your own faith through their witness or example? Consider encouraging them, by letting them know the impact their witness has had on you.
- If you are studying this course during the season of Lent, continue to pray for the gospel message to 'sound forth' and be glorified throughout Holy Week. Rejoice in the fact that you have been called to share the life-changing message of Easter.

Historical Context: Aristarchus of Thessalonica

Aristarchus, one of the Thessalonian Christians, became a partner with Paul in preaching the gospel. (Philemon 1 v24). Aristarchus travelled with Paul through Macedonia and suffered persecution in Ephesus (Acts 19 v 27, 20 v 4). He sailed with Paul to Rome (Acts 27 v 2), where they both became prisoners (Colossians 4 v 10).

Tradition holds that Aristarchus later became bishop of Apamea in Syria and that he died a martyr's death under the Emperor Nero.



Appendix

- Visual Summaries of 1 and 2 Thessalonians produced by The Bible Project
- Printed copies of 1 and 2 Thessalonians

THE CHURCH OF ACTS
SILAS & PAUL



THEIR DEPTHS
CAUSE SINNING
JESUS IS KING
(1:7)

1 THESSALONIANS

Holiness
Love
Future Hope

FOLLOWING JESUS PRODUCES A COUNTER-CULTURAL **July** WAY OF LIFE...

... THAT RESPONDS TO HOSTILITY WITH **LOVE** & GENEROSITY.
... THAT IS MOTIVATED BY **HOPE** IN THE COMING KINGDOM OF JESUS.

1-3 A CELEBRATION OF FAITHFULNESS

10-10 THE
THESSALONIANS
CONVERSION



YOU TURNED AWAY FROM **IDOLS**
TO SERVE THE **LIVING & TRUE GOD**,
AND ARE WAITING FOR THE COMING
OF GOD'S SON FROM HEAVEN. (1:9-10)

2:15-16 THEIR COMMON PERSECUTION



WE WERE HAPPY TO SHARE NOT ONLY THE GOOD
NEWS FROM GOD BUT **OUR VERY SEVES**,
BECAUSE WE CAME TO DEARLY LOVE YOU. (2:3)



2:1-12 PAUL'S
MISSION IN
THESSALONICA

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP
IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS
& COMMON SERVICE.

3:1-12 PRAYER
FOR ENDURANCE



MAY GOD INCREASE
YOUR **LOVE, HOLINESS,**
& **HOPE!**

4-5 A CHALLENGE TO GROW

1:1-8 **HOLINESS & SEXUAL PURITY**
FOLLOWING
JESUS
TEACHES
SEX & MARRIAGE
(PARTIAL)
(1:3-5, 2:1-5)



WORKING HARD SO THAT YOU
CAN BE GENEROUS TO OTHERS
(see 2 THESSALONIANS 3:11-13)

4:9-12 COMMITMENT TO
LOVE & SERVICE

5:23-26 PRAYER
OF HOPE

MAY GOD
KEEP YOU **HOPE** AS
YOU AWAIT THE
ARRIVAL OF
JESUS.

1:1-5 THANKSGIVING
PRAYER
I THANK GOD
FOR YOUR **FAITH,**
AND **LOVE** and
HOPE!

THEIR SUFFERING IS A WAY OF PARTICIPATING IN THE STORY OF JESUS



2:17-3:10 THE THESSALONIANS
ARE SUFFERING!

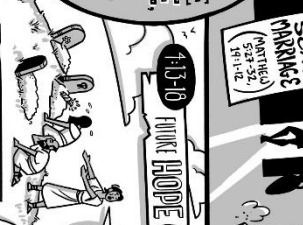
SEND
THOUGHTS
ON US!

... & THOUGHTS
OF DISCOVERY

WE'RE COMING
STRONG!

AND WE
MISS PAUL!

4:13-18 **HONOR HOPE** OF JESUS RETURN



THOSE WHO
HAVE DIED IN
THE MESSIAH
WILL RISE. (4:16)

WHAT'S
LEFT OF
THEIR BODIES
REMAINS?

CAESAR'S ARRIVAL
MET BY HIS DEPARTURE

JESUS ARRIVAL
MET BY HIS PEOPLE (4:17)

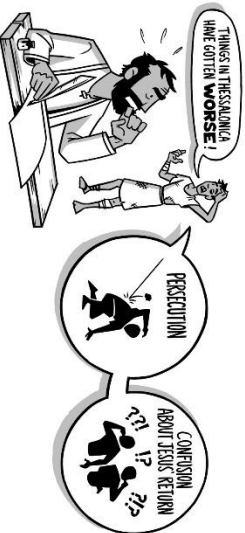
PEACE & SECURITY!



5:1-11 HIS HOPE WOULD MOTIVATE **GENEROSITY**

THE DAY OF
THE LORD WILL
COME LIKE
A THIEF IN THE NIGHT... (5:2-3)

... SO LIVE IN
THE **PRESENT**
AS IF THAT DAY IS
ALREADY HERE. (5:11)



2 THESSALONIANS

BELIEF IN JESUS' RETURN & HOPE FOR FINAL JUSTICE

NOT SPECULATION ABOUT THE LIVES

INSPIRED HOPE & FAITHFULNESS FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

WHAT YOU HOPE FOR SHARES WHAT YOU LIVE FOR.

1 HOPE DESPITE PERSECUTION

11-13

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

I THANK GOD FOR YOUR FAITHFUL LOVE, ENDURANCE.

PERSECUTION HAS INTENSIFIED

14-17

SUFFERING = PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S KINGDOM

JESUS FOLLOWERS SHOW THEIR VICTORY THROUGH NON-VIOLENCE & ENDURANCE

THEY WILL NOT BE SHARDED. THEY WILL REMAIN IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD & FROM THE GLORY OF HIS POWER.

JESUS RETURN = FINAL JUSTICE

11-17

HAY THE LORD JESUS BE HONORED THROUGH YOU.

THE ULTIMATE TRAGEDY

2 THE DAY OF THE LORD

PAUL SAYS:

THE DAY OF THE LORD IS AT HAND UPON US!!

GODS FINAL JUSTICE ON EVIL

DID JESUS COME LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT? (SEE THESSALONIANS 5:2)

JESUS HAS ABANDONED US!!!!

I WISH I COULD TELL YOU THAT!

REMEMBER WHAT I TAUGHT YOU...

...THE LORD WILL KEEP PRODUKING RULERS AND REBELS & EXALT THESSALONIA'S ABOVE GOD.

THE REBEL

GAIL BREAKS VIOLENCE & HANGS ON GODS ARM.

JESUS WILL CONQUER THE REBEL. BUT NOT FOREVER... & DELIVER HIS PEOPLE.

THE - IS NOT TO FUEL APocalyptic SPECULATION TO ATTEMPT TO COMPARE THE THESSALONIANS & RECALL JESUS TEACHINGS (SEE MARK 13)

THE EVENTS LEADING TO JESUS RETURN WILL BE OBVIOUS! YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SCARED.

PHEAR!

210-17

HAY THE LORD GIVE YOU COMFORT & STRENGTH

3 CHALLENGE TO THE "IDLE"

POSSIBLE:

JESUS GOING AWAY (NOT RETURNING)

JESUS GOING AWAY (NOT RETURNING)

NOT LAZY, BUT IRRESPONSIBLE & REFUSING TO WORK (SEE 1 THESSALONIANS 5:10-12:14)

MORE LIKELY: ROMAN PATRONAGE

CLIENTS (PATRONAGE) FEEL HE SIX PROSTITUTES.

SOME OF YOU ARE LEADING A DISORDERED LIFE, NOT WORKING, BUT MESSING IN THE BUSINESS OF OTHERS.

PAUL'S EXAMPLE

PRAISING JESUS SELF-GIVING LOVE

PROUDLY FORWINGST TO SEND OTHERS FREE OF CHARGE

THE DEAL:

WORKING HARD SO THEIR LIVES CAN BENEFIT OTHERS

3:10-10

HAY THE LORD OF PRAISE GRANT YOU PEACE

1 Thessalonians (New Revised Standard Version)

1¹ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

² We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake.

⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸ For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹ For the people of those regions **1** report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead-Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

2 ¹ You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, ² but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. ³ For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, ⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. ⁵ As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; ⁶ nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others,

⁷ though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. ⁸ So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. ⁹ You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. ¹¹ As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, ¹² urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

¹³ We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers. ¹⁴ For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone ¹⁶ by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins; but God's wrath has overtaken them at last.

¹⁷ As for us, brothers and sisters, when, for a short time, we were made orphans by being separated from you-in person, not in heart-we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face. ¹⁸ For we wanted to come to you-certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and again-but Satan blocked our way. ¹⁹ For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? ²⁰ Yes, you are our glory and joy!

3 ¹ Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we decided to be left alone in Athens; ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith, ³ so that no one would be shaken by these persecutions. Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for. ⁴ In fact, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer persecution; so it turned out, as you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labour had been in vain.

⁶ But Timothy has just now come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us-just as we long to see you. ⁷ For this reason, brothers and sisters, during all our distress and persecution we have been encouraged about you through your faith. ⁸ For we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord. ⁹ How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? ¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

¹¹ Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. ¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. ¹³ And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

4 ¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honour, ⁵ not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

⁹ Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰ and indeed you do love all the brothers and sisters throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more, ¹¹ to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you, ¹² so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one.

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself, with a cry of

command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

5 ¹ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴ But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.

⁶ So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷ for those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

¹² But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; ¹³ esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. ¹⁵ See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil.

²³ May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

²⁵ Beloved, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them. ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

2 Thessalonians (New Revised Standard Version)

1

¹ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of everyone of you for one another is increasing. ⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring.

⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, and is intended to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering. ⁶ For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to give relief to the afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marvelled at on that day among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 ¹ As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here.

³ Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. ⁴ He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. ⁵ Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? ⁶ And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, ¹⁰ and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, ¹² so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.

¹³ But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

3 ¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you, ² and that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people; for not all have faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. ⁴ And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command. ⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

⁶ Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. ⁹ This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. ¹¹ For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. ¹² Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right. ¹⁴ Take note of those who do not obey what we say in this letter; have nothing to do with them, so that they may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Do not regard them as enemies, but warn them as believers.

¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with all of you. ¹⁷ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write. ¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

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