

## 1 Thessalonians 1 Study notes



### **Opening Prayer:**

Our loving God, we meet here for this time around your written Word. Thank you for this space and opportunity. Guide our discussion and increase our understanding, we pray. May we be open to hearing what you may have for us to learn about ourselves and you so that we may grow in faith and be more open to your Spirit leading us forward as disciples of Christ our Saviour. Amen.

### **Just a minute:**

Each person is to take 1 minute to introduce themselves and 1 thing this 5 week study brings to their mind before they start. (Hope, fear, anxiety, peace??? etc)

### **Purpose for the Letters** (have this read by someone)

Timothy's report of conditions in the Thessalonian church led Paul to write the first letter shortly after he arrived in Corinth about A.D. 51. Some of the Thessalonians apparently believed that Jesus Christ was about to return momentarily and had consequently given up their jobs

and had become disorderly. Some worried about what had happened to their loved ones who had died before the Lord had returned. Persecution from the Gentiles as well as the Jews still oppressed the believers who were nevertheless holding fast to the truth and eager to see Paul again. Some outside the church, however, remained hostile to Paul. It also appears that some within the church had returned to their former habits involving sexual impurity.

It seems that Paul had at least three purposes in mind when he wrote 1 Thessalonians. First, he wanted to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica who were making good progress in their new faith. Second, he desired to correct misinformation about himself and his fellow missionaries that some of his critics in Thessalonica were circulating. Third, he wrote to give additional instruction that would contribute to the Thessalonians' spiritual growth.

**Read** (have this read by someone)

1 Thessalonians 1

### **Take 10**

Discuss the sermon and the reading. What was new or a challenge? Discuss the differences in the 3 Christian workhorses of: Work of Faith, Labour of Love and Endurance of Hope.

### **Take 2 mins**

In quiet reflection, think about people who encouraged you in your Christian walk.

### **Now Share**

How you feel reflecting on these people and how has their encouragement shaped you and how do you encourage others?

### **Engaged to serve**

V4-5 Talks about how the Holy Spirit engages with Paul but also with us today in bringing the Gospel to others. Share where you have felt stirred to speak / respond or maybe where in hindsight God has used you in bringing the gospel to others.

## **Society and Culture**

The church in Thessalonica did not always have an easy ministry as idolatry and pagan worship was the societal norm. Today our society faces similar challenges and the church again is confronted.

What are some of the idols of our society today?

What are some of the idols in our church culture today?

## **Consumer Church**

Churches can be seen as 'Consumer Churches' where it's almost like a transactional faith.

**Extension:** Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Ecc. 3 talks about the extremes of seasons that come to our lives. The consumer church is most celebrated when the seasons are good and positive as it is seen as a sign of God's favour being upon them. It is however most broken apart by harsh seasons it encounters or its congregation members encounter as it can be seen that people have been unfaithful, not prayed enough, not given enough and more.... leaders can also use harsh seasons to almost abuse congregational members by stating they have brought themselves to this place. As our society becomes more vocal in what it dislikes about the church culture it impacts our ability to be positive. These harsh seasons unfortunately seem to bring about a huge exit of ordained and lay people from leadership who cannot cope with the criticism or feel unworthy in their call.

Discuss the problems faced by churches that are seen like a commodity we buy into. How does this affect how we engage in ministry and mission with each other and into our broader community?

Why would a consumer church be attractive to people?

How would a non-consumer church be attractive to people? What traits are its strength?

## **Encouragement**

The Thessalonians shone as a light in many ways for Paul in his ministry. How do you think the Thessalonians felt getting this letter? How do you think other churches then would have responded when they read this letter? If your church received this letter today and you had to tell the congregation, how would you deliver the message?

## **For the week ahead**

Challenge: Write a letter or email to someone who has encouraged you or could do with encouragement and send it to them.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2

## **Prayer**

Gracious God,

Thank you for this time spent together. May what we have read and shared enrich us in the coming week so that we are better able to be your hands, feet and voice in our community and in your world. May we be a blessing to our Christian community and our neighbours. May your kingdom come. In the name of our Lord and Saviour, we pray. Amen.

# 1 Thessalonians 2 Study notes



## Opening Prayer:

Loving and Gracious God,

We thank you that we are able to come together freely, in this place to discuss your Holy Word. We ask that you would open our eyes, ears and hearts to receive your message. Help us to discover ways to apply your Word in our daily lives. Grant us courage and strength to faithfully do your will and follow your teaching in our conversations and discussions that we will engage in during our time together and reaching out to others.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen

## Just a minute:

Each person is to take 1 minute to note something that engaged them from week 1 or did they take up the challenge of writing a letter of encouragement to someone, how was this experience.

## Biblical World view (have this read by someone)

What type of world view do we have? George Barna (American Market research analyst) reports at the start of 2014 that 7% of Christians in America have a Biblical world view and 51% of ministers do as well. Defining such a worldview as believing that absolute moral truth exists, that it is based upon the Bible, and having a biblical view on six core beliefs.

- the accuracy of biblical teaching,
- the sinless nature of Jesus,
- the literal existence of Satan,
- the omnipotence and omniscience of God,
- salvation by grace alone,
- the personal responsibility to evangelise

Maybe this research challenges you or you may feel its parameters are too narrow. It is of note that not everyone sees this view as correct and that there are varying aspects of how we personally find God engages us and the world.

## Read (have this read by someone)

1 Thessalonians 2

## Take 10

Discuss the sermon and the reading. What was new or a challenge? Discuss some of the ways Christians or the church may have tried to sell the Gospel rather than be its steward.

## Take 2 mins

In quiet reflection think about people who opened yours eyes to different truths in the Gospel.

## Now Share

How you feel reflecting on these people and how has their encouragement shaped you. How do you encourage others?

## Read

Acts 20:24 and Romans 10:14-15

How does this differ from how we as the church may be acting today.

## Society and Culture

Vs 3 and 4: Think about the phrase “pure love is without conditions”. Do we put conditions for how we as a church love or engage the world depending on a response sought or given?

## Church Culture

What practices or beliefs take place in the life of the church which could well be seen as being made up by humans, e.g. lighting a Christ candle? And do these things have a place in worship?

## Extension:

Looking at the 6 core beliefs, rate them in order of the easiest one to accept to the hardest and compare and discuss in the group.

How do denominational parameters interplay with these 6 beliefs? Would some denominations change the order for which were more highly accepted or rejected?

Rank these in order of what you feel the church teaches / preaches on from the most prominent to the least. Any surprises?

## Encouragement

God sees you with his eyes and knowledge of your potential. He has a purpose and a plan for each one of us and sometimes we can only see the problems of the past and not the hope of tomorrow.

## Engage

How do you think the church then would have responded when they read this letter where Paul places forward his claim that he came with integrity in his preaching and living, not a snake oil salesman?

If, when you hear a sermon or teaching about God it engages you, is it the Holy Spirit or just good words and phrases that have engaged you? How do you discern the difference?

## For the week ahead

Challenge: investigate a non-christian sect or other religion and find 3-5 things that define them as not being Christian.

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 3

## Prayer

Gracious and Merciful God,  
We thank you for this precious time of growth and renewal, while we were gathered here in your name. We give you thanks and praise for the opportunity to meet and look at Thessalonians together. We bring before you all of the groups that are meeting, may they be filled with excitement as they discover and engage what it means to be stewards of your Gospel. Grant all your peace and strength at this time. You remind us in 2 Timothy 1:7 that you did not give us a spirit of fear and timidity, but a spirit of power and self-discipline to extend to ourselves and those we care about and meet in our daily lives. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Amen



# 1 Thessalonians 3 Study notes



## **Opening Prayer:**

Gracious Father

We thank you for the opportunity to come together to study your word. We pray you will help us learn from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Help us to understand the letter, and may we, with prayer, apply it to our lives. May we be encouraged, just as the Thessalonians were, when they read this letter.

In Jesus' name. Amen

## **Just a minute:**

Each person is to take 1 minute to note something that engaged them from week 2.

## **Christianity is different**

Did you investigate a non-Christian sect or religion? What differences they had to Christianity? Share with your group.

Spreading the good news is a "body" event. The whole church across all denominations is involved. We may not be the mouthpiece but we are often the hands and feet.

## **Church Unity in Australia** (have this read by someone)

The National Council of Churches in Australia

The modern ecumenical movement began to take shape as the 19th century drew to a close. Initiatives among students and between Church mission agencies led the way. This country saw the formation of the Australian Student Christian Movement (1896) and the National Missionary Council (1926).

Out of the devastation of World War II sprang the Australian Committee for the World Council of Churches (1946). This developed into the Australian Council of Churches which, in 1994, gave way to the National Council of Churches in Australia.

The movement for Christian unity in this country was, initially, a Protestant affair. Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches came in, in strength, during the 1960s and 70s. For Catholics, the 2nd Vatican Council opened up fresh possibilities for relationships with other Churches, and the transition to the National Council of Churches in Australia (1994) saw the Catholic Church become a full participant in Australia's national ecumenical body.

## **Read** (have this read by someone)

1 Thessalonians 3

## **Take 10**

Discuss the sermon and the reading. What was new or a challenge? Why is Unity hard in the greater and local church context?

## **Take 2 mins**

In quietness reflect: Have you ever been treated negatively or shunned for being a Christian? Would you be confident or self-conscious if you were found reading your Bible in a public place or café?

## Now Share

Has society and its views changed towards the public expression or engagement of our faith. If so where have you noticed these changes?

## Read

1 Corinthians 3:6-9

What gifts do you have and how do you enjoy sharing them?

How do these compliment others in your group?

## Society and Culture

The early disciples suffered violent opposition to the Gospel. Today this opposition comes in different forms - apathy to God, vilification of the church, false statements about the churches power/wealth, etc. etc... What do you see as emerging opposition or opportunity areas to the Gospel in our society?

## Church Culture

Vs 8: Your strong faith in the Lord is like a breath of new life. What acts of strong faith (in you or others) have encouraged you in your walk with God.

## Extension:

The Servant King – Graham Kendrick  
I the Lord of Sea and Sky- Daniel Schutte  
Blessed be your name – Matt Redman

Have someone read the words of one or more of the songs to the group. How do these words help your view of Jesus' call to fulfilling your destiny?

How does this song speak to you in a call to follow Him?

## Encouragement

William Arthur Ward said, "Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you."

## Engage

Why has God called you to be part of your church at this time? How may he use you in the coming months or years?

## For the week ahead

Challenge: write a letter or email thanking someone who has done something that has increased your faith in God.

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 4

## Prayer

Father God, we thank you for your servant Paul and for his letters to different communities. Paul was continually focused on you. He believed that you are the source and goal of all, and we should live and work moment by moment in your presence. May we too believe and act similarly. Thanks for this study and be with us now as we go our separate ways.

Amen

## 1 Thessalonians 4 Study notes



### **Opening Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, we come before You with a desire to learn more about you. Re-ignite the fire within our hearts to seek and know You more. Give us a passion to live for You - that our souls may find peace in serving You and Your Church. We bring our talents irrespective of what they are, to serve You and grant us your presence in this series of study. Amen

### **Just a minute:**

Each person is to take 1 minute to note something that engaged them from week 3.

### **Letters**

Have any of you received a letter because of this study series? Have any of you sent a letter? How has it made you feel?

### **What is Theology**

Theology seems to be a bad word today. To many it communicates bigotry, arrogance, and exclusivism riddled with impracticality. Sure,

people will allow you to have your theology, just don't let it be known with too much conviction that you actually believe it. You can have your beliefs just don't push those upon others.

Most simply put, theology is the study of God. It comes from the word *theos* which is Greek for "God," and -ology which is from the Greek word *logos* meaning "word." Most literally then the word theology means "words about God" or "the study of God." If one were to use the term generically, it functions much like "philosophy" or "worldview." People often use the word this way in secular venues. Often it is used very specifically, speaking only about God. Generally speaking, theology is a belief system that is built upon intellectually and emotionally held commitments concerning God and humankind.

**Read** (have this read by someone)

1 Thessalonians 4

### **Take 10**

Discuss the sermon and the reading. What was new or a challenge? Where has theology been misinterpreted or misrepresented in the public space?

### **Read**

Hebrews 10: 22-25 alongside of 1 Thess 4:3-8

Paul's words corporately and individually encourage the church to accountability.

How is accountability lacking in our churches, home groups and lives today? What could help fix this?

How does accountability or lack thereof jade societies' view of God.

### **Take 2 mins**

In quietness reflect: Some Christians do more to hurt the Christian faith through their words than their actions could ever rectify.

### **Now Share**

Share an evangelism, ministry or mission experience where people knew you were a Christian (outside of the church walls) by your actions as well as by your words?

**National Church Life Survey:** says that bible reading is diminishing. Apathy, irrelevance? Society clashing? Discuss how and why you see this as a challenge and how we could change this.

### **Society and Culture**

The church has made some mistakes over the past years. Society is able to articulate where our faults are better than we sometimes can ourselves. How does personal and corporate accountability stand within the culture of our church?

### **Church Culture**

Vs 13-18 talk about the return of Jesus. This was a huge topic for this church in the early times. Some even sold up all they had as they expected Jesus return was imminent. What would be 3 things you would do if you had 1 week till God's return?

### **Extension:**

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

How does this passage challenge the church to live in our society as ambassadors of God? Why is this passage used more at weddings and funerals than teachings on evangelism?

If Paul was writing to your church today where would he celebrate how you are loving the community and where would he encourage you to love more?

### **Encouragement**

When our mortal lives end, as a Christian, it is a hyphen and not a full stop. Knowing our destination speaks richly into our testimony of God in our lives. Things of mortality and death seem like taboo topics in our

current society and yet the early church and Paul's letters addressed this regularly.

### **Engage**

Many in our society believe in a spiritual realm, however they rarely discuss life after our mortality has ceased. Share how you may be able to talk of the hope of our destination?

How does this phrase resonate with you: When we as Christians talk about death, we do so with a hyphen and not a full stop, this is the hope of the Gospel.

### **For the week ahead**

Challenge: Read 2 Thessalonians and note the different influences and themes in the letters.

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 5

### **Prayer**

Gracious God. Thank You for bringing us together and for this period of study. We thank you for the thoughts we have shared, for the opportunity to know each other a little bit better - to trust each other more. Encourage us to spread the Good News to our community as we are all desperate to know and love You more.

Lord, be our anchor, and stir up our smouldering faith that people may know You through our love, our hope and our deeds. Amen



## 1 Thessalonians 5 Study notes



### **Opening Prayer:**

Gracious Father, as we gather together around your word help us to understand more fully Your truth...Your love...Your care...Your hope for our lives.

Bless our time together and help us to share openly and honestly with each other so we may all be encouraged in our walk with you. Amen.

### **Just a minute:**

Each person is to take 1 minute to note something that engaged them from week 4.

### **Letters**

Did you read 2 Thessalonians? How was it different? Any sweet surprises?

### **Paul**

Paul was well learned in the Psalms, Prophets and Old Testament rabbinical teaching and law. His letters give us an insight into his depth of knowledge and yet how the Old Testament points towards the

coming of the messiah... Saviour... Jesus the Christ. He is attributed to have written 13 of 28 of the New Testament books with 1 Thessalonians considered his first work chronologically. It is thought he was at the stoning of Stephen and if he was not part of the Sanhedrin (special council of 71 Rabbis) he was close to its core.

He is an example of a reformed religious extremist. He had set his life on the eradication of the Christians however he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus and his life changed. He never sought the use of violence to promote the gospel. A truly changed heart. He became a follower of Christ around 33 A.D. and died in Rome around 62-64 A.D. Paul teaches on the equalitive nature of the Holy Spirit as a gift to all people who become Christians. He also notes that we have different gifts and these set us apart but also are the bond which holds us together as a body of believers.

Paul is released from his first imprisonment at the age of about 61. He heads back to the mission field and preaches the gospel until he is arrested again and returned to prison. He is Martyred under Emperor Nero.

### **Read** (have this read by someone)

1 Thessalonians 5

### **Take 10**

Discuss the sermon and the reading. What was new or a challenge? How has Paul modelled leadership in this letter and has this changed your view of Paul from before this study series started?

### **Read**

Read Romans 12:17-21. Discuss this passage then think about where the church / Christians sometimes tries to act for God in ungodly ways but justify it as righteous anger or scriptural judgement.

### **Take 2 mins**

In quietness reflect: The call to warn, encourage and help. Why should we warn and not correct someone? Correcting is our natural default.

### **Now Share**

How may we better approach each other in the church when it comes to matters of personal challenge and change?

Does discipline still have a place?

### **Sermon Pondering**

The sermon title for me as a minister this week was “do what needs to be done but ENJOY being church”. Who defines what needs to be done? What things may not need to be done but we do them anyway? What is there to enjoy if we are working so hard for God, we miss it?

### **Society and Culture**

Society affirms leadership predominately on personality types and traits. What do you feel is of utmost importance to good church leadership and why?

### **Church Culture**

Read 1 Cor 12: 12-31– What does it mean for us in church to be a Body of believers. What do you hope for in this body?

### **Extension:**

Quote from the sermon: Don't quench the Spirit. I think many ministries are killed by people who throw a bucket of water over the Holy spirit... it does not need to be baptised ... WE DO!

Why is the modern church often challenged by what the Holy Spirit did in the early church? Why do we often put out its flame?

Thinking about how the Holy Spirit manifests in the scriptures, what would you feel challenged, concerned or accepting of if it happened in our church or community today?

### **Encouragement**

Paul encourages the church to: Be patient with everyone from leaders to congregants, to those outside of the church. Rejoice, pray and give thanks....in all circumstances.

### **Engage**

Why is it sometimes hard for us to accept Paul's encouragement for the ancient church, in Thessalonica, in our lives we live today?

### **For the week ahead**

Challenge: find someone in your church you do not know well and introduce yourself to them.

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians...all of it! And read it to enjoy it and be encouraged by it!

### **Prayer**

Magnificent Lord,

We thank you for our time together. Thank you for the things we have shared and the insights your Holy Spirit has shown us from your Word. May the Joy we saw in the Thessalonians rekindle afresh our joy and love for you and make our love increase and overflow for one another. May our hearts be strengthened and encouraged to be your faithful people for this Age. Amen