

# Why study 1 Thessalonians?

*They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

**1 Thessalonians 1 v 9-10**

When a group of first-century pagans in the Greek city of Thessalonica first believed in Jesus, it was no small thing for them. They rejected the idols they had previously served, and were so transformed that they quickly became the talk of the ancient world—and a shining example for followers of Christ in the 20 centuries that have passed since then. They became known, not only for what they rejected, but also for their faith, hope and love.

Do you feel like an ordinary Christian? Not especially gifted or knowledgeable? Does anyone really notice your faith? Does any of it matter? Then take time to look at the Thessalonian believers with this easy-to-follow guide.

The apostle Paul, thrilled to see their vibrant Christian lives, recorded his delight in this warm letter, packed with advice and encouragement to keep going. This was a transformation that would change lives, cultures and destinies far beyond ancient Macedonia.

Learn through this Good Book Guide how an unremarkable, pointless existence, can be transformed into a life marked by unshakeable faith, overflowing love and sensational hope. It is this kind of life that ordinary Christians like you are called to; so that, in our world of suffering, hostility and trials, we will be blameless and holy when our Lord Jesus comes.





## 1 Thessalonians overview

# CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGEMENT

### talkabout

1. Think about how other people can best help you when you are attempting something difficult (a diet, an exam, breaking a bad habit, for example). Share your tips with the group...

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### investigate

Paul had visited Thessalonica with Silas in about 50AD, and his preaching had resulted in the beginnings of a Christian church in the town. He had only been there for about three weeks, however, when he was forced to flee because of a riot (you can read the details of the story in Acts 17 v 1-9). This letter, one of the earliest of the New Testament letters, was written to the young church he had been forced to leave behind.

We're going to start by reading through the whole letter (it will only take about 15 minutes). As you do so, think about the following questions:

2. How had the church in Thessalonica been getting on in Paul's absence?

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3. How would you describe the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians?

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► **Read 1 Thessalonians 1 v 1 – 5 v 28**

4. What specific issues does Paul deal with in this letter?

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5. Paul's letter would originally have been read out loud (5 v 27). What encouragement do you imagine the original hearers would have received from these words?

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### explore more

The encouragement of other Christians is an important theme throughout the New Testament letters. How do the following references help explain further what Christian encouragement involves?

- Ephesians 4 v 29
- Colossians 3 v 16
- Hebrews 10 v 24-25



### apply

6. What similarities can you see between the church of the Thessalonians and your own church?
- What good things in this letter can you thank God for in your own church?
  - What examples or instructions in this letter are a challenge to you and your church?

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## getting personal

- What encouragements have you personally received from reading this letter as a whole?
- What ways can you think of to 'encourage others with these words' (4 v 18)?
- How might you do this better in the coming days?



## apply

7. Imagine a non-Christian friend discovers you are spending some time studying 1 Thessalonians. Having now read it all the way through, how might you begin to explain to them what the letter is all about?

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- What can we learn about the good news of Jesus Christ?

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- What can we learn about what it means to be a Christian?

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- What can we learn about the church—its work and its relationships?

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## getting personal

What are you looking forward to as you study 1 Thessalonians? Learning some first century history, or having your heart, mind, and life changed by the living Word of God? If God is speaking through the Bible studies, how can you make sure that you will hear and act upon what He says?



## pray

### Thank God...

- for the privilege of studying His Word
- for the encouragement we can receive from other Christians
- for the joy of discovering God's will for our lives in the scriptures

### Confess to God...

- ways in which you are conscious of not growing as you should be
- times when you have not encouraged other Christians as you should have

### Ask God...

- for His blessing as you study 1 Thessalonians
- for encouragement from His Word for your day-to-day Christian life
- for opportunities to encourage others
- for the Spirit's help in putting these lessons into practice