

## 5) Their Reputation in the Community

Read Acts 17:5-10 One aspect of Paul's message stuck in the minds of his opponents as key. Identify that teaching. What might our community "accuse" us of harping on too much for their liking? Is this a good or bad thing to be associated with as our core teaching?

Brainstorm: Talk about some ways that we can make this same important doctrine what our opponents (and friends) identify us with.

## 6) A New Mission Takes Root

Some of the following topics below will be explored in these letters. Pick three of them and share what answers you anticipate we might discover.

- A. What forms the basis for a new mission start?
- B. What keeps a new congregation focused and strong in faith?
- C. How is a congregation able to take root in a short time?
- D. What helps a congregation stay rooted even when there is persecution?
- E. How does being physically unable to visit one another affect pastor and flock?
- F. What occasions call for extra encouragement?
- G. What will we see arise in the visible church during the End Times?
- H. How should a Christian occupy their time?

Discuss why is it always a good time for a new mission start. How might the challenges a new mission faces prove to be blessings in the end?

List several organizations or people in your sphere of influence which you know need encouragement. Come up with ways of offering that encouragement

## Introduction



## Study Map

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## 1) Why Read This Letter?

Apart from Galatians, these are the earliest letters we have from the apostle Paul. They were written around 50-51AD and are unanimously attributed to Paul by the early church. Irenaeus (c. 180) quotes 1 Thessalonians by name. Both letters are listed in the canon of Marcion (c. 140) and Muratori (c. 175). They were known by the church fathers, Ignatius (c. 140), Justin, Polycarp (c. 100). Read 1 Th 5:27 to get an idea of how these letters circulated and spread to us today. Read 1 Th 2:13 and discuss why this letter is still important for us to read today.

## 2) Major Theme: Encouragement

When is a time in your life when you greatly needed encouragement? Paul speaks about encouragement in his two short letters to the Thessalonians more than ten times. That's more than any other New Testament letter. The congregation faced persecution when it was very young, but mutual encouragement in the gospel kept them strong. The believers encouraged Paul as they remained in faith, hope, and love.

Read the following verses about how God offers encouragement and discuss how we find the same type of encouragement today.

### Encouragement:

1 Th 2:11-12 (from a "father")

1 Th 3:2 (in-person)

1 Th 3:7 (for a pastor)

1 Th 4:18 (during loss and sadness)

1 Th 5:11 (don't quit)

1 Th 5:14 (the wavering, the weak)

2 Th 1:3-4,11 (*thanksgiving, boasting, prayer*)

2 Th 2:16-17 (for sanctification)

Which type of encouragement is needed most by people around you today?

## 3) Background

What would you do to start a new church? Read Acts 17:1-4. Paul had less than a month to work at Thessalonica. But he made the most use of his time. Describe Paul's method of evangelism, his message, and the makeup of his new congregation in Thessalonica.

Find at least three of the five core truths/mantras of Lutheran ministry found in Paul's early days in Thessalonica:

1) Grace Alone

2) Faith Alone

3) Scripture Alone

4) Christ Alone

5) Glory to God Alone

Which of these 5 mantras do you see most clearly in your church? Which one would we do well to emphasize even more?

## 4) Encouragement to Carry On

What experience do you have with a new mission effort? Do you know how the effort was funded? Read Acts 16:40. Recall what had happened to Paul and his companions at their previous city, Philippi. What encourages missionaries as they set out into a new field?

Paul worked hard to share the gospel without charge to the new congregation in Thessalonica. (1 Th 2:9) What else aided Paul in his ministry? (cf. Philippians 4:14-16)

Compare this new mission support to how our church body goes about with new mission starts in a new field of ministry. List some of the blessings and challenges that come with various means of funding those efforts.

Funding blessings:

Funding challenges:

## 5) The Message Rang Out!

Who has made some of the biggest impact on your faith in your life? Read 1 Th 1:7-10. Describe what the Thessalonian believers did for the spread of the gospel after coming to faith.

Agree or Disagree: “When it comes to evangelism actions speak louder than words.”

Paul says the Lord’s message “rang out” as the faith of the Thessalonians became known everywhere. Read the following description of their life and witness from Paul and explain how a faith can “ring out” without having to shout.

*“You do love all of God’s family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, 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, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders.” (1 Th 4:10–12)*

Explain: “The Christian life is filled with immediate and abundant faith, hope, and love. It is overflowing with joy. But it really subsides in patient waiting.”

## 6) Doctrines Abound

Scan through 1 Th 1 and relate what it teaches us about the following topics:

- Prayer
- Conversion
- The power of the gospel
- The Trinity
- Evangelism
- The Person of Jesus
- The Work of Jesus
- God’s judgment on sin
- God’s grace for us

Which doctrine would you like to see emphasized more in our congregation’s life?

What did you find most encouraging in this opening part of the letter?

## 1 Th 1 Thanksgiving for Faith, Hope, Love



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## 1) We Thank God for All of You

Recall that Paul, Silas, and Timothy had to leave Thessalonica (Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey 50-51AD) The believers sent them away for their own safety. Paul spent a little time in Berea and Athens and then moved on to Corinth where he stayed for around 18 months. He wrote from Corinth after receiving a return report from Timothy. Scan through and evaluate the tone of the opening chapter. Use this chapter to describe what the situation was like for the Thessalonian Christians.

## 2) Faith, Hope, Love

What do you tend to focus on when something does happen the way you might have planned? Read 1 Th 1:1-3. Paul could have focused on all the opponents of the gospel and how he had been driven away from Thessalonica. But he begins with thanksgiving to God. List three things he is thankful for.

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Sometimes we might fall into the temptation to focus on the evil around us instead of how God works his good purpose despite the opposition to the gospel. Explain how a congregation that is facing difficulty can focus on the fruits of the gospel instead of the setbacks.

Make a list of at least three things you can thank God for in your congregation despite whatever challenges it has faced.

1)

2)

3)

## 3) What Causes Our Conversion

Paul began by preaching to the Jews in the synagogue in Thessalonica. He led them to faith in Jesus as the Christ. He also reached many non-Jews. *“Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.”* (Acts 17:4) Read 1 Th 1:4-5a and list at least two of the reasons listed for their newly found faith in Christ.

Compare your answer above with what Paul writes in Romans 1:16, 1 Th 5:19, 2 Th 2:13-14. How can putting the emphasis on these two truths about conversion encourage the evangelist in their work?

## 4) In the Midst of Suffering

Have you known any Christians who displayed joy in the midst of suffering? The Thessaonian Christians had a reputation for joy even while facing severe sufferings. Recall the cause of much of their suffering. Read 1 Thes 5b-11. Paul credits that joy in the face of suffering as the working of the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit use to kindle that joy in our lives?

Identify some forms of suffering Christians face today. What are you the most likely to face in the near future?

Explain how welcoming the gospel message “in the midst of severe suffering” makes us “imitators of the apostles and of the Lord.”

## 6) Boasting?!

When Christ returns Paul plans to boast. How will his boasting differ from...

...The unbeliever?

...The self-righteous churchgoer?

...From the things we sometimes like to boast about in the Church?

## 7) The Power of the Gospel

“Gospel” and “God’s Word” comes up often in this chapter. Scan through 1 Th 2 and find at least six things the gospel worked (actions, attitudes, relationships etc) in the people of Thessalonica, the believers at Thessalonica, and in the heart of Paul and his companions.



Share a key truth you learned in this chapter which you would like to hold onto.

Key verse in this section:

**1 Th 2:13** When you received God’s word, which you heard from us, you did not receive it as the word of men but as the word of God (as it really is), which is now at work in you who believe. (EHV)

## 1 Th 2 Integrity of Paul’s Ministry



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### 1) Approved by God

What sort of jobs call for people to become “people pleasers”? Gospel workers are always under the temptation to please people so that they might gain support or money. Explain why no one could accuse Paul and his companions of misconduct or deceit. Discuss what sort of impure motives or flattery can cause damage to a church.

Read 1 Th 2:1-17 Use this section to craft a job description for a Christian missionary.

## 2) Not to Be a Burden While We Preached

Paul and his companions could have rightly received support from those they served in the mission fields. But they often chose to go without it for a while in order to be free from any false accusation of greed. They did this in Thessalonica. "We worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you." See Acts 18:3 for the way Paul first supported himself in some of the new mission fields.

Read 1 Th 2:6b-12 and discuss the pros and cons of carrying out a "tent ministry."

**Agree / Disagree** "Tent ministry is the best option for every new mission start."

## 3) Sharing Not Only The Gospel

*"We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."* -1 Th 2:8

Identify some ways you feel that a congregation might suffer if the pastor merely functioned as a professional teacher and preacher who professionally presides over the services rites and correctly administers the sacraments.

List some things which make the gospel ministry different from many other occupations.

## 4) Faith Comes by the Gospel

Paul didn't need to practice any deception, use flattery, or manipulate people for personal gain. It is clear his only goal was to teach and preach the gospel. He knew that the gospel would work out amazing things for everyone. Read 1 Th 2:13-16. Explain why everything hinges on the sharing of the gospel. What does that mean for you and your church's ministry?

## 5) We Were Separated!

What is the most painful separation you have had to face? Read 1 Th 2:17-20. Describe the relationship between the missionaries and their young flock.

Paul was hindered from in-person visits by persecution. Describe some other ways Satan hinders a pastor from visiting with the flock he shepherds.

Do you have any suggested solutions to such hindrances? Find Paul's mention of God's ultimate solution for such hindrances.

## 5) More Encouragement!

How do you suppose a pastor feels when he hears that member of his flock are surviving through hard trials and temptations? Read 1 Th 3:7-10. Paul says he “was afraid that somehow the Tempter had tempted you and our labor might have been for nothing.” 1 Th 3:5. Why is this one of a pastor’s worst fears?

What does a pastor need to do in order to prevent his greatest fears?

Describe how the flock in turn keeps their pastor from being shaken and filled with joy.

## 6) Praying Earnestly

Read 1 Th 3:10-13 Note who Paul credits for all his joy and for sustaining his joy. What can happen when we place too much emphasis on the human side of our perseverance in the faith? Explain what the content of Paul’s prayers here teach us about:

- Our prayers’ content
- Our prayer’s goal
- The extent of our sanctification
- The work of God in sanctification
- The work of God in preservation of faith
- The event we all should eagerly await

## 7) The Heart of a Missionary

Paul openly lists his personal feelings in this section. List several things we learn from his emotions which reveal that heart of a missionary. Identify what appropriate actions his emotions led him to take.



Share a key truth you learned in this chapter which you would like to hold onto.

What would you consider a key verse in this section?

## 1 Th 3 An Encouraging Report



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## 1) Sent To Strengthen and Encourage

Recall how Paul and his companions were forced to separate from the Thessalonian congregation. He didn’t want their faith to grow weak during their separation. Discuss the significance of Paul’s titles for Timothy.

Read Acts 16:1-5 to see how Timothy began his work with strengthening fellow believers. Read 1 Th 3:1-2. Describe some ways God’s people can strengthen the faith of others.

## 2) Shaken But Not Broken

Have you ever had someone share a story of how something shook their faith? Read 1 Th 3:3-5. Describe the types of trials we know the believers were facing in ancient Thessalonica. Note who Paul labels as the ultimate enemy. What sort of trials seem to shake people's faith the most?

Brainstorm: Cite at least four examples from the rest of Scripture when we are given warnings about facing various trials.

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Discuss why it is important to teach and tell fellow Christians that God foretold suffering would come for them.

**Evaluate:** "The more you serve God the easier your life will go for you."

## 3) We'll Always Have Thessalonica

What are some fond memories you've shared with others united with you in faith?

*But now, Timothy has returned to us from you and has told us the good news about your faith and love. He also told us that you always have fond memories of us and long to see us, just as much as we also long to see you. -1 Th 3:6.*

The fond memories of Paul and the believers at Thessalonica weren't just about prosperous times. They were about discovering the gospel and growing in faith together. They included hard times as well as good times. Brainstorm some ways to continue to foster "fond memories" in order to encourage other believers.

## 4) God Provides at the Right Time

Paul sent Timothy for a reason. Review 1 Th 2:17-18. Paul clearly wanted to visit in person but found it an impossibility. He recognized that Satan was working against the gospel. God, however, was one step ahead of the enemy. Paul was able to send Timothy.

One might speculate that Timothy's Greek background made it easier for him to blend in and sneak back behind enemy lines. Recall that Timothy had fairly recently joined up with Paul. It seems God sends just the right person at the right time!

Apply: When the pandemic started in 2020 a lot of Christians began to cut off regular communication with their pastors and fellow Christians. How were some able to still keep up communication and encourage isolated believers during some of the lockdown efforts?

Have you ever experienced a time when God sent just the right person at just the right time to carry out his work and share his gospel?



## 5) Make it Your Ambition

Have you ever felt like your job was meaningless and didn't matter? Read 1 Th 4:11-12. How might this encouragement help the Christian who feels they don't make a difference in the world because they aren't noticed by others the same way a missionary or pastor might be noticed?

Discuss the various ways a Christian can serve God simply by faithfully carrying out their vocation in life.

Apply: Violet feels that her life has been wasted because she didn't have a high-paying career. She wasn't able to be a teacher like she wanted because she wanted to spend more time at home when her children were young. She expresses her regret at "not amounting to much." How would you counsel her to change her view?

Evidently the Thessalonian believers did not consider it worthwhile keep up with daily work. It seems they reasoned that since Christ would soon return, they had no need for working hard. The sinful nature will find any excuse it can for giving into temptation. What sort of sins might we want to excuse today due to our misapplication of the Bible's doctrines?

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## 6) Review

Share a key truth you learned in this portion of the chapter which you would like to hold onto.

What would you consider a key verse in this section?

Review the letter up to this point by scanning through the previous chapters. Pick one or two of the topics below as time allows and use the previous portion of this letter to draw out important reminders.

- Encouragement
- Communication
- Prayer
- The Power of the Word
- The Work of the Trinity
- The Work of a Pastor or Missionary
- Growing in Faith and Christian Living
- God's Grace for Sinners

## 1 Th 4a Sexual Purity & Christian Vocation



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### 1) Don't Stop Growing in Your Walk

What are some different ways pastors guide and instruct the flock on sanctified living today? Read 1 Th 4:1. The believers were doing good! But Paul urged ongoing growth in sanctified living. What dangers arise from setting the bar low for Christian living?

Identify at least two things wrong with this statement: "I'm going to church and raising my family; that ought to be good enough to please God each week."

## 2) Sexual Purity

Paul made sure to note that the instructions he gave were given to the flock “through our Lord Jesus.” He didn’t make any of it up. He shared the Word of God to his flock. Why does that often need to be emphasized when we discuss sanctification?

Read 1 Th 4:2-3. What reasons did the Thessalonians Christians have for wanting to do “God’s will.”? What particular sins did Paul identify needed attention in ancient Thessalonica’s culture?

Discuss which sins you feel need attention in our current culture.

## 3) How to Obtain a Spouse

If you are married, are you willing to share how you met your spouse and ended up getting married? Today’s dating scene is full of confusion and social media has added to that confusion. Read 1 Th 4:4-5. Describe some ways which people try to find a spouse which are...

- Unwise
  
- Ungodly
  
- Wise
  
- Holy and honorable

Read 1 Th 4:6-8. How does a Christian overstep their bounds in the dating world or take advantage of another Christian who they might befriend or marry?

Once again, note that to reject Paul’s “Dating advice’ is not to simply reject Paul, but to reject the Holy Spirit. **Respond:** “What I do with my relationships is none of your business.”

**Agree or Disagree** “God forbids Christians to practice what the world calls ‘dating.’”

## 4) Growing in Brotherly Love

Describe the “brotherly love” which we all have been taught by God.

Once again, the Thessalonian believers were not failing to live in love. But Paul urges continued growth. What does this say about your sanctified living?

We might be tempted to check “brotherly love” off our list because we have done something good. How does a true Biblical definition of brotherly love keep us ever striving to increase in love?

## 5) Getting Straight the Sequence of Events

It appears that the Christians in ancient Thessalonica thought that you needed to be alive at Christ's return to enjoy his eternal kingdom. They were new to the faith and still lacked understanding about the resurrection. Review 1 Th 4:13-18. Use the clearest and most straightforward meaning of this section to describe what will happen when Christ comes again.

Millennium? Seven-Year Tribulation? Some take the start of 1 Th 4:17 and insert a long period of time between Christ's first coming and his second coming. Look at the surrounding context to see if Paul indicates anything other than a single return of Christ.

**Trumpet call of God** (Compare with Mt 24:30-31)

**"We will be with the Lord forever"** we need to turn to the rest of Scripture to get a more complete picture of what eternity will be like after the world is destroyed.

2 Peter 3:10-13; Mt 24:35

Compare with Isaiah 24-25

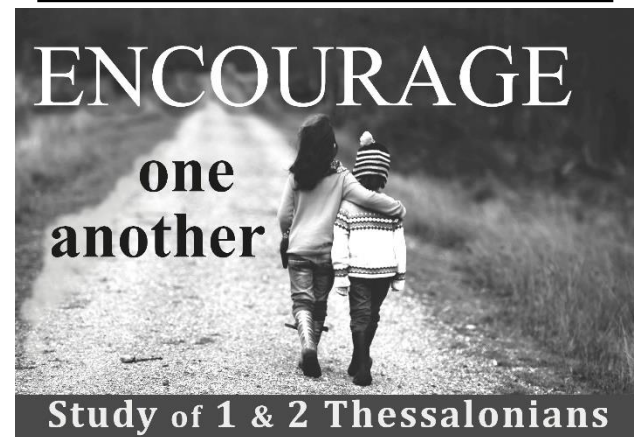
## 6) Encourage One Another With These Words

Sometimes it seems Christians over speculate on the current state of those who have died. They find comfort in knowing the rest and peace the dead in Christ now enjoy. They are with Christ in paradise and free from this world's curse of sin. That is all true. However, most of the focus of our comfort ought to be in the hope of the resurrection. That is our final and greatest comfort!

What are the benefits of sharing a person's favorite song or a eulogy at a funeral? What are some of the drawbacks? Give some reasons why most WELS pastors will want to keep eulogies outside of the memorial service. What ought to be the focus of every Christian funeral?

**In your own words:** Use this section to come up with at least four comforting statements of hope you can share. Design the words so you can use them to encourage and comfort person grieving someone who has fallen asleep in Christ.

## 1 Th 4b The Resurrection of the Dead



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### 1) Don't Grieve in The Same Way

What have you witnessed about the grieving process or ceremony at the death of someone without the hope of Christ? Read 1 Th 4:13. What are some ways which a Christian could be left "uninformed" about those who have died and end up grieving the wrong way? Have you noticed any practices at Christian funerals which too closely imitate the practices of non-Christian funerals?

## 2) "...In the Same Way"

Some family cultures and regional cultures frown upon displaying grief. Other cultures foster an environment for open grief. What about the Christian congregation and Christian home? Note that Paul doesn't say that Christians aren't allowed to grieve when someone dies.

Look at the following examples and list what makes a believer's grief over death similar and what makes their grief different.

2 Samuel 12:13-23

2 Samuel 18:33

Matthew 14:6-13a

John 11:17-35

Acts 8:2

Job 1:18-21

**For further discussion:** What are proper burial methods? Compare the following:  
Genesis 3:19; Genesis 35:29; Genesis 50:1-3,26; 1 Samuel 31:11-13; Job 19:25-27

## 3) "Asleep Through Jesus"

Share a brief list of non-Christian euphemisms which are ways of saying someone has died. In this section of his letter Paul refers to believers who have died as "those who have fallen asleep in Jesus." Read 1 Th 4:13-18 and find the other descriptive titles used for dead believers. Explain why the expression "fallen asleep" is far more than a euphemism for death.

**Evaluate** how frequently we talk about death with these terms. **Agree Disagree:** "It would be to our benefit to use this description of death more often."

**Brainstorm:** Come up with some ways which we could use this description of death more often.

The early Christians used this euphemism for death (Acts 7:59-60; 1 Cor 15:18-20). It comes from the Old Testament (Daniel 12:1-3; Psalm 90:5). Jesus also used sleep to speak about death (Matthew 9:23-24; John 11:13)

In what sense is everyone who has died "asleep"? (Compare with Daniel 12:1-3)

## 4) The Rest of Mankind Have No Hope

Death is a universal fate of mankind. It doesn't matter what type of life you have lived or whether you are rich or poor. In Adam all die. We can try to ignore this fact, or we can turn to our Lord for answers and comfort. Read Psalm 49. What does the Psalmist point to as a common false comfort of the people of this world? What does he identify as the comfort of all believers?

Find the verse in Psalm 49 which is a summary of all that Paul says in this section of his letter.

Read 1 Th 4:14 What does our hope hinge upon?

## 6) Get Dressed with Faith, Hope, & Love

What sort of activities do you like to do after dark? What different types of activities do you like to do when you wake in the morning? The Christian is no longer living in the darkness of sin, but a new life in the light of the gospel. Read 1 Th 5:7-8 Compare this section with Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:15-17.

Paul isn't just talking about getting dressed for the day. He is talking about getting dressed for the spiritual battle we must face each day. (This letter uses similar pictures and themes at its closing as the closing part of Ephesians. Compare with Ephesians 6:10-17) Describe how we get dressed for spiritual battle with:

Faith:

Love:

Hope:

## 7) Encourage One Another and Build Each Other Up

Read 1 Th 5:9-11. Identify some of the "gospel in a nutshell" statements.

*"Whether we are awake or asleep"* Use the context and defend which interpretation you think fits best!

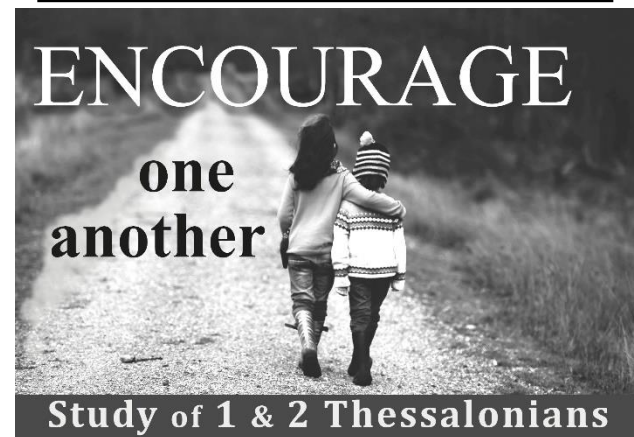
Awake	or	Asleep
Christians who are alive at Christ's return		Christians who are dead at Christ's return
Spiritually alert Christians		Spiritually dull Christians
All people who are alive		All who have died
Christians who are physically awake at Christ's return		Christians who are physically sleeping at Christ's return

Or a play on words including all the above

Some Bibles will choose an interpretation for you and paraphrase. For example, *"Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever."* (NLT) Discuss the pros and cons of this type of a Bible translation.

This section closes with the urge to continue to encourage one another and build one another up! List what you found most encouraging and most edifying in today's reading. Explain why you need both law and gospel to do those things.

## 1 Th 5a Ready for Christ's Return



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## 1) Don't Look for Dates

Pope Innocent III predicted that the world would end in 1284 (666 years after the rise of Islam). The Great Fire of London and the plague led many to think the world would end in 1666. Countless Christians and non-Christians have predicted the end of the world. They range from Anabaptists, Baptist, Shakers, Anglicans, Muslims, Jehovah's witnesses, and self-appointed fraud prophets Read 1 Th 5:1-2. Give some reasons why people feel the need to know the exact date of the end of the world.

## 2) Don't Look for Delays

Some non-Christian groups have set dates for the end of the world in the far distant future. For example, the Geological Society of London says we can expect an earth-shattering meteorite to strike every 100 million years. (They claim the one that killed dinosaurs was 66 million years ago.) Others say in 7.59 billion years the earth and moon's orbits will collide with the sun. Read 1 Th 5:3 Describe the general attitude of the world right before it ends. How have you seen that attitude in the culture around you? How might we be tempted into the same mindset?

Give some reasons why we'll be hearing more people say, "Peace and security" as the end of the world approaches.

How often do you make plans for the distant future? Discuss to what degree we ought to account for the end of the world in our long-term plans. (Compare James 4:13-17)

Labor pains are coming to those who are pregnant. They shouldn't be surprised even though they come suddenly and at an unknown hour. But it will be too late for them to come to faith and be saved.

## 3) Word Games "In the Dark"

Read 1 Th 5:4-6. In what sense we can say that all those who predict a far-distant end of the world are really "in the dark."

**Agree or Disagree:** "Most of the world will be surprised when Christ returns."

**Agree or Disagree:** "Most Christians will be surprised when Christ returns."

## 4) Word Games: "Asleep"

Recall how Paul had referred to sleep as a picture for death in 1 Th 4. Here he plays on the idea of sleep again. However, a different word is used for sleep. (1 Th 4 "sleep" κοιμάω. 1 Th 5 "sleep" καθεύδω.) Both words can be used figuratively to refer to death, but the first one is used most often in that sense. Paul uses the second word to describe those who are spiritually dull or indifferent. (Compare with Eph 5:14) In the end, the context here makes it clear Paul means those who sleep are not spiritually "alert and sober."

List some ways in which we might be "sleeping" and eventually be unprepared to "fall asleep" or to come face-to-face with Christ's return.

## 5) The Contrast Will Be Stark

Review 1 Th 5:4-6

### Identity

*You are sons of light / not of darkness  
You are sons of day / not of night*

### Therefore, call to action:

*Do not sleep like the rest / be alert and sober*

Paul first contrasts a Christian's identity with an unbeliever's identity. Then he lists what a Christian ought to be doing. (Compare with Eph 5:8) What does this tell us about how to urge sanctified living?

Explain why a Christian's status makes them stand out in strong contrast to unbelievers around them.

Explain why a Christian's actions make them stand out in strong contrast to unbelievers around them.

## 5) A Closing Blessing

Read 1 Th 4:23-24 Explain what comfort you have in knowing the “God of peace” will himself make you holy and blameless at Christ’s return.

If God has called you to faith, what else will he do for you? Explain why you can be so sure he will do it?

## 6) The Closing Charges & Blessing

Use the closing four verses of this letter to describe the things you should see happening at every Christian church.

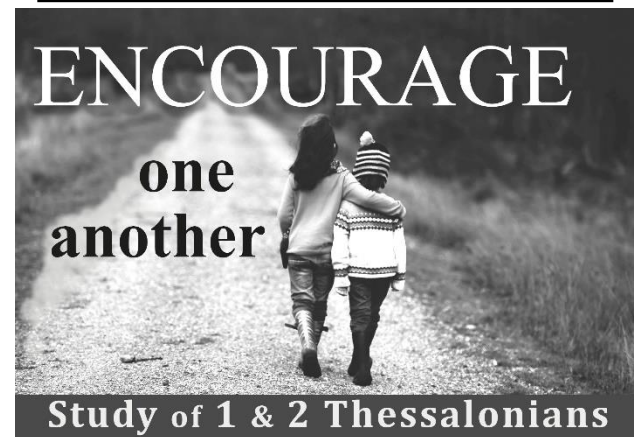
## 7) 1 Thessalonians Review

After listing numerous commands, the letter closes with gospel comfort and blessings from God. It opens and closes with the focus on “our Lord Jesus Christ.” Share a key truth you learned in this letter which you would like to hold onto. What would you consider a key verse in this letter?

Scan through this closing section once more (or if time allows through all the previous chapters). Pick one or two of the topics below and draw out important reminders.

- Encouragement
- Communication
- Prayer
- The Power of the Word
- The Work of the Trinity
- The Work of a Pastor or Missionary
- Growing in Faith and Christian Living
- The Return of Christ
- God’s Grace for Sinners

## 1 Th 5b Closing Encouragements



### Study Map

Introduction

1 Th 1 Thanksgiving for Faith, Hope, Love

1 Th 2 Integrity of Paul’s Ministry

1 Th 3 An Encouraging Report

1 Th 4a Sexual Purity & Christian Vocation

1 Th 4b The Resurrection of the Dead

1 Th 5a Ready for Christ’s Return

### ► 1 Th 5b Closing Encouragements

2 Th 1 Christ’s Return as Judge

2 Th 2a The Man of Lawlessness

2 Th 2b-3a Hold Fast to the Gospel

2 Th 3 Christian Vocation

### 1) Hard Work for All

List some of the things a hard-working pastor does. Explain why it might be easy for members of a local church to not notice all the work their pastor does. How might a pastor be tempted to fail to work hard?

Read 1 Th 5:12-13. Identify the two things Paul highlights here as part of the work of a pastor. Why might these two things involve some of the more difficult tasks?

## 2) Living In a Pastor's Paradise

Explain why the person who leads is often the most criticized in the family, the workplace, or in sports. It may feel like everything depends on those who lead, but a healthy environment depends on everyone involved. Review 1 Th 5:12-13. Name the two things in these instructions which help maintain a healthy Christian congregation.

*"Hold them in the highest regard"*

What are some appropriate ways of showing respect for a faithful, hard-working spiritual leader? How is it done in your church?

**Agree or Disagree:** "You can take this command too far to the detriment of everyone."

*"Live at peace with each other."* A congregation is a body of believers. Explain why it is crucial that the body gets along. What are some inappropriate and worldly ways of establishing "peace"? What are some biblical ways of establishing and maintaining peace?

**Explain:** "Obtaining peace is of greatest importance. How it is obtained is equally important."

## 3) We Encourage You...

The closing of this letter includes numerous short commands. Each one deserves an entire letter. Read 1 Th 5:14-15. Each command has a way of combating the effects of sin.

Underline least three of the commands listed which you feel needs more attention in your life or within your congregation. Share at least one way you can help give it more attention.

Circle two commands of the commands listed here which you feel are a strength of yours or of your congregation. Come up with at least one way to increase or encourage those efforts.

1) Admonish

2) Encourage

3) Help

4) Be Patient

5) Don't Give Payback

6) Strive for Doing Good to People

## 4) The Contrast

Read 1 Th 5:16-22, Eight commands are listed here which all deal with the Christian's faith life. List and briefly discuss each one. Note especially why each instruction is important in warding off discouragement and attacks against your faith.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

Share why each of these commands is especially important as we live in the end times.



## 5) Christ's Return as Judge

There are progressive sublets of the visible Christian church which deny that anyone will face God's judgment or that there is a hell. Read 2 Th 1:6-10. Describe what this section reveals about the following biblical doctrines:

- ✓ Jesus' Return
  
- ✓ Judgment Day
  
- ✓ Hell
  
- ✓ Salvation by Faith

Find at least three truths in this section which offers encouragement for the suffering believer.

Regarding uncommon phrase: "Obey the gospel"

- But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who believed our message?" (Ro 10:16)

## 6) We Constantly Pray for You

Read 2 Th 1:11-12. List four important truths about prayer.



Review 2 Th 1. What actions can we emulate, or truths can we share from this chapter to encourage fellow believers?

## 2 Th 1 - Christ's Return As Judge



### Study Map

Introduction

1 Th 1 Thanksgiving for Faith, Hope, Love

1 Th 2 Integrity of Paul's Ministry

1 Th 3 An Encouraging Report

1 Th 4a Sexual Purity & Christian Vocation

1 Th 4b The Resurrection of the Dead

1 Th 5a Ready for Christ's Return

1 Th 5b Closing Encouragements

▶ 2 Th 1 Christ's Return as Judge

2 Th 2a The Man of Lawlessness

2 Th 2b-3a Hold Fast to the Gospel

2 Th 3 Christian Vocation

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### 1) A Second Letter

This letter was evidently written within a few months of 1 Thessalonians. After Paul had heard a new report, he had further encouragement and instruction for the new congregation. Read 2 Th 1:1-2 and review the significance of the words used in the greeting and the titles for God.

Briefly review the background and formation of the "church of the Thessalonians." (see Acts 17 if needed.)

## 2) Yet More Boasting

What sort of things do you most often hear parents boasting about? Read 2 Th 1:3-4 to see what a missionary is proud of. Paul had already mentioned that he would boast about the Thessalonian Christians at Christ's return. *"Indeed, who is our hope or joy or crown about which we boast before our Lord Jesus when he returns? Is it not you?"* (1 Th 2:19) He wanted them to know that he was already boasting about them to the other churches. Identify what particular things he was able to boast about.

Juhana Pohojola is a pastor in Finland. In the past decade he was expelled from his building and defrocked by the liberal state church. And today he is on trial for "hate speech" because of his refusal to compromise biblical doctrine. The synod president of the LCMS, a Lutheran church body in America which is partnering with Pohojola's church, inquired how the new Finnish mission work has been progressing. Pohojola replied, "Every time they attack us, we grow." Explain why Christianity is not only able to survive but can even thrive in the face of opposition.

**Agree or Disagree:** "We need to do more boasting about the faith and love of Christians who are enduring persecutions."

## 3) Evidence

Can a Christian ever prove their faith? What sort of evidence could reliably demonstrate faith or unbelief? Read 2 Th 1:5. Paul indicated that a believer's perseverance amid persecution is evidence that God's judgment is right for believers and unbelievers. Look up the following and discuss how your endurance in the face of evil can be used as evidence. Identify what evidence is presented in each.

- Job 1:8-12
  
- Daniel 6:26-27
  
- Matthew 5:11-12
  
- Romans 16:1-10
  
- Hebrews 12:7-8
  
- Acts 5:39-41
  
- 1 Cor 11:18-19

## 4) A Worthy Word-Study

"Worthy" (2 Th 1:5) is from the Greek verb καταξιώω, "consider fitting, worthy," The main verb is ἀξιώω "suitable, worthy." We have an English word derived from this Greek word. "Axiomatic" is English for "self-evident or unquestionable." Worthy living does not contribute to our justification. Faith alone justifies. Christ's work alone makes us worthy of the kingdom of God and all his blessings. Our new living is only evidence of a new heart of faith. We could never be worthy of eternal life and Christ's holy gifts. But worthiness is tied in with our sanctification. The life which follows faith gives glory to God and is evidence of faith. Investigate how Paul uses this word later in this chapter (2 Th 1:12). Explain who makes us worthy of anything and for what purpose he does.

We can, however, make ourselves unworthy of God's gifts through unbelief, rejection of the gospel, and unrepentant sin. Some examples:

- unworthy of the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:27-29)
- unworthy to receive the gospel (Acts 13:45-46)
- unfit to be a disciple of Jesus (Mat 10:38)

The Later Day Saints will often speak about worthiness and tie it directly with the doctrine of justification. Explain why this violates the Scripture's use of the word and its teaching of justification.

For the proper attitude of faith regarding our own inherit worthiness before God.

- Luke 7:7-9
- Luke 15:18-19
- John 1:27

God alone is worthy of all worship and praise

- Rev 4:11
- Rev 5:11-12

