

discover
**1 AND 2
THESSALONIANS**



STUDY GUIDE

discover
1 AND 2
THESSALONIANS



CoffeeBreak





We thank Brent and Diane Averill, Erica Eizenga, Libna Sierra, and Carol VanWyk, members of the revision writing team, for revising this study. We also thank Jeff Sajdak, dean of students at Calvin Theological Seminary, for contributions made in a theological review of the content. The original lesson material was written in 1990 by Neva Evenhouse and revised in 1999 by Deb Fennema.

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Printed in the United States of America.

We welcome your comments. Call us at 1-800-333-8300 or e-mail us at editors@faithaliveresources.org.

ISBN 978-1-59255-674-8

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How to Study

The questions in this study booklet will help you “do it yourself” and discover together what the Bible says.

Questions are the key to Bible discovery. Through questions you search for the writers’ thoughts and ideas. The questions in this study guide are designed to help you in your quest for answers. You can and should ask your own questions too. The Bible comes alive with meaning for many people as they uncover the exciting truths it contains. Our hope and prayer is that this guide will help the Bible come alive for you.

The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Step 1.

Read through each Bible passage several times. Allow the ideas to sink in. Think about the meaning of the passage.

Step 2.

Answer the questions in the “What does it say?” section of the study guide lesson, drawing your answers from each passage. Write answers in your own words. If you use Bible study aids such as commentaries, Bible handbooks, or Internet sites, do so only after completing your own personal study. Answering the questions before the group meets enables you to remember what you have discovered and to prepare for the group conversation.

Step 3.

Fill in the “Conversation” boxes with your questions and thoughts. Include questions that you would like to discuss with the group, topics that you would like to learn more about, and ideas from the passage that have made an impact on you. For example, in the “Conversation” boxes, you might include answers to questions like these:

- What is this passage saying to me?
- How does it challenge me? Comfort me?
- Is there a promise I can claim?
- For what can I give thanks?

Step 4.

Have fun talking with others about what you have discovered!

- Step 1.
- Step 2.
- Step 3.

1 Isaiah 1 Judgment and Justice

Getting Started
The prophecy of Isaiah beautifully reveals the amazing, surprising God who is the Lord of heaven and earth. Let's see what the opening chapter of Isaiah shows about this God, and how he calls his people to live.

What Does It Say?

1. Isaiah 1:1
What does Isaiah tell us about himself and his book in the opening verse?

2. Isaiah 1:2-9
What charge does God bring against his people? Describe their situation.

3. Isaiah 1:10-15
In the Old Testament, God set up a sacrificial system that became part of Israel's covenant relationship with the Lord. Animals such as bulls, lambs, and goats would be sacrificed to atone for ("cover over") sin. The purpose of this type of sacrifice was to bring the people close to God and seek his forgiveness. Ultimately the sacrifices pointed to Jesus' death for our sins once and for all (Heb. 10:10; 9:26-28).

New Moon feasts (usually the first day of the month in the Hebrew lunar calendar) and

Let's talk about ...

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New Testament Snapshot

The New Testament is made up of 27 books focusing on the life and mission of Jesus Christ, the Savior, the King of kings and Lord of lords who is promised throughout the Old Testament. It is named the New Testament (meaning “new covenant”) because Jesus announced the beginning of a new covenant that fulfilled all the requirements of the old covenant (Old Testament), offering us salvation from sin and new life forever with God (see Matt. 5:17-18; 26:28; Luke 22:19-20).

The first four books of the New Testament are the gospel (“good news”) accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These biographical books tell the good news story of Jesus, the Son of God, who came to live among us and bring us salvation from sin. Two of the gospel writers, Matthew and John, were part of Jesus’ group of twelve closest disciples, known as the apostles (see Luke 6:13-16). Mark, attributed as the writer of the second gospel, was a young man who was part of the wider group of Jesus’ followers. Many scholars believe that Mark got much of his information about Jesus from the apostle Peter. The other gospel book was written by the historian/physician Luke, who accompanied the apostle Paul on some of his missionary journeys. The book of Acts, also written by Luke, is a historical account of the early church. The remaining books of the New Testament are letters written mainly by Jesus’ apostles to churches and individual believers.

The standard for books to be included in the New Testament was that the material had to be written by an apostle or by someone closely associated with the apostles. The apostle Paul wrote thirteen letters, and the others were written by Peter, James, John, and Jude. The author of Hebrews is unknown, but the book of Hebrews is included in the New Testament because its information is accurate and it was written by someone well known to the apostles and the early church (see Heb. 2:3). The final book, Revelation, is a letter from the apostle John to a group of churches in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), and it is called apocalyptic writing because it recounts John’s visions (revelations) of heaven and of Christ’s return at the end of time.

The letters examined in this study, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, were written by the apostle Paul to the church in Thessalonica (a city in ancient Macedonia, now a part of Greece). Paul, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, had trained to become a Pharisee, a devout religious leader, and he

later became a leader in the persecution of early Christians. While Paul was traveling to Damascus one day, Jesus appeared to him and changed the course of his life (Acts 9). From that point on, he followed Christ, who sent him out to be an apostle to the Gentiles (all peoples who were not Jews). Paul started many churches during his missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia (Greece). He had the ability to reach people from all walks of life, and he followed up by writing letters to many of the churches he planted.

Paul's first and second letters to the Thessalonians were written early in his ministry, possibly while he stayed in Corinth for a year and a half (see Acts 18:1-11). Many of Paul's letters follow the same basic outline: 1. a greeting; 2. a statement of thanksgiving; 3. the main body of the letter; and 4. the closing.

Introduction to 1 and 2 Thessalonians

The apostle Paul was fully aware of the strategic value of Thessalonica. It was the largest city in Macedonia at that time, and it had compelling historical and geographical status. Historically, Thessalonica was a “free city” in the Roman Empire because it had supported Octavian, also called Augustus (see Luke 2:1), in the battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. As a result, the Roman emperor gave it special status that included local autonomy and even the right to tax local residents. The city was named after Alexander the Great’s half-sister, Thessalonike, and for Paul it represented a cosmopolitan, multicultural center that would naturally be a challenge to the gospel.

Another significant feature was the city’s geographic location. Thessalonica had a great harbor for shipping. Located on a major east-west trade route, the city thrived from commercial enterprise. For Paul, it was a strategic entry point for spreading the Christian message throughout Macedonia, Achaia (Greece), and beyond. Today the city remains a significant presence in northern Greece and is called Thessaloniki (also Salonika).

The first lesson of this study will include some background from the book of Acts on the story of Paul in Thessalonica with his missionary companions Silas and Timothy. They brought the good news there during Paul’s second missionary journey, about twenty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Though Paul spent only a brief period in Thessalonica, it was a fruitful time in which the local church became established. Paul continued to minister to this church through correspondence, which included the letters that we call 1 and 2 Thessalonians today.

Glossary of Terms

Achaia—a Roman province that occupied the southern Peloponnesian peninsula (present-day Greece); this province included the major cities of Corinth and Athens.

apostle—“one sent forth.” The apostles were leaders in the early Christian church. They were chosen by Jesus to be his closest followers (Luke 6:13-16), so most of them were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ ministry and death, and he met and ate with them after his resurrection (Luke 24). Paul became an apostle after Jesus appeared to him in a vision and sent him to preach the good news to the Gentiles (Acts 9; 1 Cor. 9:1-2; 15:3-9).

archangel—one of the highest ranking angels. Michael is the only archangel named in Scripture (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7).

Christ (Jesus)—the second person of the Trinity; the name *Christ* means “Anointed One.” Jesus, the Son of God, came to save God’s people from the curse of sin and death and to give them new life forever with God. See also **Jesus (Christ)**.

church—(*ecclesia* in Greek) means “assembly” and refers to a group of believers who have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

day of the Lord—a biblical term referring to the time when Jesus Christ will return and bring an end to suffering, sin, and death, delivering his people and establishing his kingdom in the new heaven and new earth (see Rev. 21:1-5). This event is also called the second coming of Christ.

faith—taking God at his Word; being “sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1); trusting in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life.

Father—see God the Father.

Gentiles—all peoples who were not Jewish by ancestry.

glorify—to worship or praise someone.

God-fearing Greeks—Gentiles who believed and worshiped the God of Israel (the Jews). Many were open to the message of Christianity.

God the Father—the first person of the Trinity (the second person is Jesus the Son, and the third person is the Holy Spirit). The Father sent Jesus into the world to save us from the curse of sin and death and to give us new life. The Father and Son also send the Spirit to live in us and guide us in Christlike living.

gospel—literally “good news.” The gospel is the good news that the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ, died and rose again for the salvation of his people and that he has ascended into heaven and will someday return to establish his kingdom.

grace—God’s kindness, undeserved favor, and forgiving love.

holy kiss—a greeting of mutual friendship in the early church.

Holy Spirit—the third person of the Trinity, equal to and one with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin, works true faith in believers’ hearts, comforts them, and lives with them forever.

hope—in combination with faith this means looking ahead in solid trust to the fulfillment of all God’s promises (Heb. 7:19; 11:1).

Jesus (Christ)—the second person of the Trinity; his name means “Savior.” See also **Christ (Jesus)**.

Jews—the people of Israel, descendants of Abraham, chosen to be a blessing to all other nations (Gen. 12:2-3).

kingdom of God—God’s rule over all things, especially in the lives of God’s people; often used interchangeably with “kingdom of heaven.”

Macedonia—a large Roman province in the first century A.D.; the section through which Paul traveled is part of present-day Greece.

man of lawlessness—someone who exalts himself and sets himself up over everything that represents God and the worship of God. This term may also refer to the antichrist of Revelation 13 (see also 1 John 2:18).

Messiah—another word for Christ, the anointed one, the promised deliverer of God’s people.

pagan—a word used to describe people who do not know God and are often characterized by sexual immorality (1 Thess. 4:5; see Rom. 1:24-27).

prophecy—the message of anyone who proclaims God’s Word. It may involve a prediction of the future.

righteous—anyone who is declared guilt-free by God through faith in Jesus’ redeeming work.

salvation—God’s gift of deliverance from sin to all who believe and trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

sanctified—being set apart (as holy) to serve God. This is a work of the Holy Spirit that continues throughout a believer’s lifetime.

Silas—a coworker of Paul who accompanied him on his second missionary journey and probably remained in Corinth when Paul left for Syria (see Acts 18:5, 18).

Spirit—see Holy Spirit.

synagogue—the meeting place for Jewish people in any town where a community of Jews might live; it was the place where rabbis taught and where people came to learn about and worship the Lord.

Timothy—a young companion and coworker of Paul (see Acts 16:1-3). He traveled extensively with Paul and is called his “beloved son in Christ” (2 Timothy 1:2).

2. 1 Thessalonians 1:1

Who sent this letter? Whom was it for?
What is the opening greeting?

For conversation ...

3. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

Why was Paul thankful to God for the
Thessalonian believers, and how did he
pray for them?

4. 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7

a. How does Paul describe the
Thessalonians?

b. In what manner did Paul, Silas, and
Timothy bring the message of the
gospel to the Thessalonians? Refer
to Acts 17:2-3 for the message Paul
proclaimed.

c. What was life like for those who believed Paul's message?

I wonder about...

5. 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

What were people in other regions hearing about the Thessalonian believers?

Taking It Home

Acts 17:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

a. What are the essentials of the gospel message found in these verses?

b. How do you think it would feel to be a Christian in Thessalonica and to receive the words Paul has written so far in this letter?

For Further Study

Acts 17:14

John 19:12

Ephesians 2:10

Acts 1:8

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

Romans 8:31-39

An Invitation

Listen now to what God is saying to you.

You may be aware of things in your life that keep you from coming near to God. You may have thought of God as someone who is unsympathetic, angry, and punishing. You may feel as if you don't know how to pray or how to come near to God.

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Eph. 2:4-5). Jesus, God's Son, died on the cross to save us from our sins. It doesn't matter where you come from, what you've done in the past, or what your heritage is. God has been watching over you and caring for you, drawing you closer. “You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13).

Do you want to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord? It's as simple as A-B-C:

- **A**dmit that you have sinned and that you need God's forgiveness.
- **B**elieve that God loves you and that Jesus has already paid the price for your sins.
- **C**ommit your life to God in prayer, asking the Lord to forgive your sins, nurture you as his child, and fill you with the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of Commitment

Here is a prayer of commitment recognizing Jesus Christ as Savior. If you long to be in a loving relationship with Jesus, pray this prayer. If you have already committed your life to Jesus, use this prayer for renewal and praise.

Dear God, I come to you simply and honestly to confess that I have sinned, that sin is a part of who I am. And yet I know that you listen to sinners who are truthful before you. So I come with empty hands and heart, asking for forgiveness.

I confess that only through faith in Jesus Christ can I come to you. I confess my need for a Savior, and I thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross to pay the price for my sins. Father, I ask that you forgive my sins and count me as righteous for Jesus' sake. Remove the guilt that accompanies my sin, and bring me into your presence.

Holy Spirit of God, help me to pray, and teach me to live by your Word. Faithful God, help me to serve you faithfully. Make me more like Jesus each day, and help me to share with others the good news of your great salvation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Evaluation Questionnaire

discover 1 and 2 Thessalonians

As you complete this study, please fill out this questionnaire to help us evaluate the effectiveness of our materials. Please be candid. Thank you.

1. Was this a home group ___ or a church-based ___ program?
2. Was the study used for
___ a community evangelism group?
___ a community faith-nurture group?
___ a church Bible study group?
3. How would you rate the materials?
Study Guide: excellent very good good fair poor
Leader Guide: excellent very good good fair poor
4. What were the strengths?
5. What were the weaknesses?
6. What would you suggest to improve the material?
7. In general, what was the experience of your group?
8. Other comments

Your name (optional) _____

Address _____