

## **LIFE TOGETHER**

### **A Four-Week Journey Through 1 Thessalonians**

#### **Introduction**

What happens when the gospel takes root in a group of people?

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians gives us a beautiful picture. This was a young church learning to follow Jesus in the middle of opposition, uncertainty, and everyday life. They did not have years of Christian experience behind them, but the gospel was already transforming the way they loved, worked, suffered, encouraged one another, and looked toward the future.

Over the next four weeks, we will slowly read through 1 Thessalonians and discover the kind of community the gospel creates. Some days we will look closely at the words Paul uses. Other days we will connect his teaching to other parts of Scripture. Throughout the journey, we will ask how these truths should shape our own relationships and everyday lives.

As you read, watch especially for three words that appear throughout the letter:

**Faith. Love. Hope.**

Also pay attention to words and ideas like:

**brothers and sisters • imitation • love • holiness • encouragement • one another • together • Christ's return**

Keep one larger question in mind throughout the month:

**What does it look like to live together as the people of Jesus while we wait for the return of Jesus?**

## **WEEK ONE**

### **A People Born from the Gospel**

The church in Thessalonica did not begin because a group of people decided they needed more community. God brought them together through the gospel. This week, we will discover what happens when people receive the good news of Jesus and begin building their lives around Him.

### **DAY 1 — A Church Is Born**

#### **READ**

#### **Acts 17:1–10**

Before reading Paul's letter, step into the story of how the church in Thessalonica began.

#### **LOOK**

1. According to verses 2–3, what was at the center of Paul's message?
2. Who responded to the gospel in verse 4? What does this tell you about the makeup of this new church?
3. What opposition did these new believers experience almost immediately?
4. Look closely at the accusation in verse 7. What did allegiance to Jesus potentially cost these believers in a Roman city?

## **CONNECT**

Read **Luke 9:23–24**.

Jesus never hid the cost of following Him. How does the experience of the Thessalonians illustrate what Jesus taught His disciples?

## **REFLECT**

The Thessalonians did not begin following Jesus because Christianity made their lives easier.

What does their story challenge you to consider about your own understanding of discipleship?

## **RESPOND**

Pray for believers who are following Jesus in places where faithfulness to Him carries significant social, relational, or physical costs. Ask God to give you the same kind of courageous faith.

## **DAY 2 — Faith, Love, and Hope**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 1:1–5**

Paul begins not with criticism, but thanksgiving. He looks at this young church and sees evidence that the gospel is already changing them.

### **LOOK**

Read verse 3 slowly.

Paul connects three characteristics with three results:

**Faith → Work**

**Love → Labor**

**Hope → Endurance**

1. What does each quality produce?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does this suggest about the difference between biblical faith and simply agreeing that something is true?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. According to verses 4–5, what made the gospel more than merely words spoken by Paul?

## CONNECT

Read **1 Corinthians 13:13** and **Colossians 1:3–5**.

What three qualities appear again?

Why do you think **faith, love, and hope** become such important markers of Christian life for Paul?

## REFLECT

Which of these three—faith, love, or hope—is producing visible fruit most clearly in your life right now?

Which might God be inviting you to grow in?

## RESPOND

Think of someone whose faith, love, or hope has encouraged you. Thank God for that person—and consider telling them.

## **DAY 3 — From Receiving to Reflecting**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 1:4–10**

Something remarkable happens in these few verses. Follow the movement of the gospel.

### **LOOK**

Look for this progression:

**The gospel comes → The Thessalonians receive → They imitate → They become examples → The message rings out**

1. According to verse 6, whom did the Thessalonians imitate?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. According to verse 7, what did the imitators eventually become?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. According to verse 8, how far did the influence of this young church begin to spread?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What changed in their lives according to verses 9–10?

## **CONNECT**

Read **1 Corinthians 11:1**.

Paul says:

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

Now trace the movement:

**Jesus → Paul and his companions → Thessalonians → Macedonia and Achaia**

What does this teach you about how disciples are formed and how discipleship multiplies?

## **DIG A LITTLE DEEPER**

In the New Testament, imitation is not pretending to be someone else. It is learning a way of life by watching faithful people follow Jesus.

Christian discipleship has always involved more than hearing truth. It involves seeing truth embodied.

## **REFLECT**

Who has modeled following Jesus for you?

And perhaps the more challenging question:

**Who can see enough of your life to imitate your faith?**

## **RESPOND**

Thank God for someone whose example has helped shape your faith. Ask Him to increasingly make your own life worth imitating.

## **DAY 4 — Turning to God**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 1:8–10**

Paul summarizes the Thessalonians' conversion in remarkably simple language.

### **LOOK**

Notice the three movements:

**You turned to God from idols...**  
**to serve the living and true God...**  
**and to wait for His Son from heaven.**

1. What did they turn **from**?
2. Whom did they turn **to**?
3. What did their new allegiance lead them to **do**?
4. What were they now **waiting for**?

Notice that conversion changes their **past, present, and future**.

## **CONNECT**

Read **Mark 1:14–15**.

Jesus begins His ministry by calling people to repent and believe the good news.

How does the Thessalonians' turning from idols toward God illustrate biblical repentance?

## **REFLECT**

An idol does not have to be a statue. Anything we look to for identity, security, worth, control, or ultimate satisfaction can begin occupying a place that belongs to God.

What are you tempted to trust more than God?

What might turning toward Him look like today?

## **RESPOND**

Name before God anything competing for your deepest trust. Ask Him to continue turning your heart toward the “living and true God.”

## **DAY 5 — A Community That Becomes a Witness**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 1:1–10**

Read the entire chapter again, this time as a description of a **community**, not simply individual Christians.

### **LOOK**

Notice how often Paul speaks about what happened among them collectively.

What characteristics of this church would have been visible to someone looking in from outside?

Make your own list from the chapter.

### **CONNECT**

Read **John 13:34–35**.

Jesus says the world will recognize His disciples by the way they love one another.

How can something about Jesus become visible through a Christian community that might be difficult to demonstrate alone?

## **REFLECT**

If someone encountered your church only through the relationships between its people, what might they conclude about Jesus?

What do you hope they would see?

## **RESPOND**

Look for one tangible way this weekend to strengthen a relationship within the church or welcome someone more deeply into your life.

## **PULLING IT TOGETHER**

Based on what you have discovered this week, finish these statements:

**The gospel is...**

**The gospel creates...**

**A gospel-shaped community looks like...**

**Our life together can show the world...**

## **WEEK TWO**

### **Sharing the Gospel, Sharing Our Lives**

The gospel did not come to Thessalonica merely through Paul's preaching. The Thessalonians had watched Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy live among them. This week, we will discover why Christian discipleship requires more than sharing information. It requires sharing ourselves.

### **DAY 1 — Lives Worthy of the Message**

#### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:1–6**

Paul reminds the Thessalonians not only of **what** he preached but **how** he lived while preaching it.

#### **LOOK**

1. What had happened to Paul and Silas immediately before arriving in Thessalonica according to verse 2?
2. What possible motives does Paul reject in verses 3–6?
3. According to verse 4, whose approval ultimately mattered to Paul?
4. Why might the character of the messenger matter when communicating the gospel?

## **CONNECT**

Read **2 Corinthians 4:1–2, 5**.

What similarities do you hear between Paul's descriptions of ministry in these passages?

## **REFLECT**

How easy is it to become more concerned about what people think of us than what God thinks of us?

Where might approval, recognition, or reputation influence the way you serve others?

## **RESPOND**

Ask God to make your character consistent with the gospel you profess.

## **DAY 2 — Sharing Our Lives**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:7–12**

Slow down around verse 8:

“Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.”

### **LOOK**

Paul uses two family images in this passage.

**A nursing mother — verses 7–8**

**A father with his children — verses 11–12**

1. What qualities does each image communicate?
2. What happens between those two images in verses 8–10?
3. What does Paul say he shared in addition to the gospel?
4. What was the goal of his encouragement in verse 12?

## **DIG A LITTLE DEEPER**

The word translated “**lives**” in verse 8 is *psychē*, a word that can refer to one’s life or self.

Paul isn't simply saying, “We spent some time together.”

His affection for these believers led Paul and his companions to **give themselves** to them.

## **CONNECT**

Read **John 1:14**.

Jesus did not save humanity from a distance. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

How might the ministry of Jesus help us understand why sharing the gospel and sharing our lives belong together?

## **REFLECT**

Who has shared their life with you in a way that helped you follow Jesus?

Who currently knows you closely enough to see what following Jesus looks like in your ordinary life?

## **RESPOND**

Thank God for those who have invested themselves in you.

## **DAY 3 — Discipleship Requires Proximity**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:7–12 again**

This time notice how often Paul's argument depends upon the Thessalonians having actually witnessed his life.

“You know...”

“You remember...”

“You are witnesses...”

### **LOOK**

What could the Thessalonians know about Paul only because he had actually lived among them?

Make a list from the passage.

### **CONNECT**

Read **Mark 3:13–15**.

Before Jesus sent the Twelve out to preach, He called them that they might first **be with Him**.

What might that tell us about the relationship between discipleship and proximity?

## **REFLECT**

Consider these two questions:

**Who are you learning from?**

**Who is learning from you?**

If you struggle to name someone, what might need to change about the rhythms of your life?

## **RESPOND**

Invite someone into an ordinary part of your life this week—a meal, a conversation, a project, coffee, a walk, or simply time in your home.

Don't feel pressure to manufacture a spiritual moment.

Simply make room.

## **DAY 4 — Our Glory and Joy**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:13–20**

Paul's affection for these believers becomes unmistakable.

### **LOOK**

1. How did the Thessalonians receive the message according to verse 13?
2. What had following Jesus cost them?
3. How does Paul describe his separation from them in verse 17?
4. What names does Paul give these people in verses 19–20?

### **CONNECT**

Read **Philippians 1:3–8**.

Compare Paul's affection for the Philippians with his affection for the Thessalonians.

What does this tell you about the place relationships occupied in Paul's understanding of ministry?

## **REFLECT**

It is possible to serve people without deeply loving people.

How does Paul's language challenge a view of Christian ministry based primarily on tasks, programs, or responsibilities?

Have the people you serve also become people who are genuinely dear to you?

## **RESPOND**

Pray by name for several people God has placed in your life—not for what they can accomplish, but simply because they are people you love.

## **DAY 5 — Love Made Visible**

### **READ**

**John 13:34–35 and 1 Thessalonians 2:7–12**

Place Jesus' command beside Paul's example.

### **LOOK**

What does Jesus say will identify His disciples?

What does Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians show that kind of love actually requiring?

### **CONNECT**

Read **Romans 12:9–13**.

Make a list of the practical expressions of love Paul describes.

Which of these require enough proximity to actually know what another person needs?

## **REFLECT**

Christian hospitality is more than entertaining guests. At its heart, it means **making room for another person in our lives.**

Where might God be inviting you to make room?

## **RESPOND**

Share something this week:

**your table**

**your time**

**your attention**

**your home**

**your encouragement**

**your story**

## **PULLING IT TOGETHER**

Complete these statements:

**Sharing the gospel without sharing my life can...**

**Sharing my life means...**

**Someone who has modeled Jesus for me is...**

**Someone God may be inviting me to invest in is...**

## **WEEK THREE**

### **Standing Firm Together**

Paul had been forced to leave Thessalonica before he wanted to. He worried about whether these young believers would survive the opposition they faced. What he wanted most was not simply to know that they were comfortable, but that they were standing firm in Jesus.

### **DAY 1 — Strengthen and Encourage**

#### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 3:1–5**

Notice the emotion behind Paul's words.

#### **LOOK**

1. What phrase in verse 1 reveals Paul's concern for this church?
2. Why does Paul send Timothy?
3. According to verses 3–4, what had Paul already taught them about suffering?
4. What is Paul afraid might have happened in verse 5?

## **CONNECT**

Read **Hebrews 3:12–13**.

Why does the writer of Hebrews connect encouragement from other believers with remaining faithful?

What might happen when Christians attempt to endure difficult seasons completely alone?

## **REFLECT**

Who helps strengthen your faith when following Jesus becomes difficult?

Who around you may currently need strengthening?

## **RESPOND**

Contact one person today simply to encourage them.

## **DAY 2 — Your Faith Strengthens My Faith**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 3:6–10**

Timothy finally returns with news from Thessalonica.

### **LOOK**

1. What good news does Timothy bring?
2. How does their faithfulness affect Paul?
3. Pay attention to verse 8: “For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.”

What does this reveal about how deeply connected Paul feels to their spiritual wellbeing?

4. What does Paul still desire for them according to verse 10?

## CONNECT

Read **Romans 1:11–12**.

Notice Paul's correction of himself. He wants to strengthen the Roman believers—and then says they will be **mutually encouraged by each other's faith**.

What does this teach you about discipleship relationships?

## REFLECT

We often think about how stronger Christians can help weaker Christians.

How might someone else's faith strengthen yours even while you are helping them?

## RESPOND

Tell someone specifically how their faithfulness has encouraged your own faith.

## **DAY 3 — Love That Overflows**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 3:11–13**

This short prayer prepares us for everything Paul will say next.

### **LOOK**

Notice the direction of Paul's prayer:

“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow **for each other and for everyone else...**”

1. Who is the source of this increasing love?
2. Who is supposed to receive it?
3. What connection does Paul make between love and holiness in verses 12–13?

### **CONNECT**

Read **John 13:34–35** and **Matthew 5:43–48**.

Jesus commands love both **within the community of disciples** and **beyond it—even toward enemies**.

How does that help you understand Paul's prayer that love would increase “for each other and for everyone else”?

## **REFLECT**

Which direction comes more naturally to you: loving those already close to you or making room for people beyond your existing relationships?

Where might your love need to overflow?

## **RESPOND**

Ask God specifically:

**“Increase my capacity to love.”**

Then remain attentive to whom He puts in front of you.

## **DAY 4 — More and More**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 4:1–8**

Paul now moves into direct instruction about how these believers should live.

### **LOOK**

1. What is Paul's goal for their lives in verse 1?
2. What phrase in verse 1 shows that growth is still expected even though they are already following Jesus?
3. According to verse 3, what is God's will for His people?
4. Count the references to God throughout verses 1–8. Who gives the commands? Whose will is holiness? Who calls us? Who gives His Spirit?

## KEY WORD — SANCTIFICATION

Paul writes:

“It is God's will that you should be sanctified.”

To be **sanctified** means to be made holy—to belong to God and increasingly have our lives shaped according to His character.

Biblical holiness is therefore much bigger than avoiding bad behavior.

It is learning to live every part of life as someone who belongs to God.

## CONNECT

Read **Romans 12:1–2**.

How does Paul's description of transformation there complement his call to holiness here?

## REFLECT

Where is God currently inviting you to follow Jesus “**more and more**”?

## RESPOND

Rather than merely asking, “What should I stop doing?” ask God:

**“What part of my life do You want to make more fully Yours?”**

## **DAY 5 — The Holiness of Ordinary Life**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 4:9–12**

Paul moves from sexual holiness to love, work, relationships, and reputation.

### **LOOK**

1. Who taught the Thessalonians to love one another?
2. Even though they already love others, what does Paul tell them to do?
3. What three ambitions does Paul give in verse 11?
4. According to verse 12, how does ordinary Christian living affect outsiders?

### **CONNECT**

Read **Colossians 3:17, 23–24**.

How does Paul connect ordinary activities with devotion to Jesus?

## **REFLECT**

We sometimes imagine significant faithfulness requiring spectacular opportunities.

Paul describes something quieter:

**Love people.**

**Live faithfully.**

**Work well.**

**Walk honorably before outsiders.**

Where might you be overlooking an ordinary place where God wants to form you?

## **RESPOND**

Choose one ordinary responsibility today and intentionally approach it as an act of worship and faithfulness to Jesus.

## **PULLING IT TOGETHER**

Complete these statements:

**Christian community helps me grow by...**

**Holiness means...**

**One area where God is inviting me to grow “more and more” is...**

**My ordinary life can become a witness when...**

## WEEK FOUR

### Living While We Wait

The Thessalonians had questions about death, grief, and the return of Jesus. Paul responds by reminding them of the gospel and then telling them to encourage one another with its hope. Christian life is shared life lived in expectation:

**Jesus died.**

**Jesus rose.**

**Jesus is coming again.**

### DAY 1 — Grieving With Hope

#### READ

#### 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Paul does not tell Christians not to grieve.

He tells them they do not grieve **without hope**.

#### LOOK

Read the passage once and make a list of everything Paul says **will happen**.

Then look for the primary thing he tells the Thessalonians **to do**.

What do you notice?

## CONNECT

Read **1 Corinthians 15:20–26, 51–58**.

What do both passages teach about the relationship between Jesus' resurrection and our future?

Why is Christian hope rooted in an event that has already happened?

## REFLECT

Paul gives significant teaching about Christ's return and then concludes:

“Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

Why do you think biblical teaching about Christ's return should produce **encouragement** rather than speculation or fear?

## RESPOND

Pray for someone who is grieving. If appropriate, reach out and remind them that they do not have to carry their grief alone.

## **DAY 2 — Children of the Light**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 5:1–11**

The return of Jesus is not simply something Christians are supposed to understand. It changes how Christians live now.

### **LOOK**

1. What contrasts does Paul draw between darkness and light?
2. What does he tell believers to do because they belong to the day?
3. Look carefully at verse 8. These three familiar words return: Faith. Love. Hope. Where did you encounter those same three qualities at the beginning of the letter?
4. What command concludes this section in verse 11?

## **CONNECT**

Read **Romans 13:11–14**.

How does Paul again connect awareness of the future with the way Christians live in the present?

## **REFLECT**

If you genuinely believed every morning that Jesus is coming again, what might change about the way you spend your time, treat people, handle conflict, or pursue what matters?

## **RESPOND**

Ask God to help you live today in light of the future He has promised.

## **DAY 3 — Life Together Gets Practical**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 5:12–18**

Slow down. Paul gives a rapid series of instructions about shared Christian life.

### **LOOK**

Make your own list of every command in these verses.

Then pay special attention to verse 14:

**Warn the idle/disruptive.**

**Encourage the disheartened.**

**Help the weak.**

**Be patient with everyone.**

What do you notice about the different responses Paul prescribes for different people?

### **CONNECT**

Read **Galatians 6:1–2**.

How does “carry each other's burdens” help you understand the kind of community Paul envisions?

### **REFLECT**

Christian care is not one-size-fits-all.

Some people need correction.

Some need courage.

Some need support.

Everyone needs patience.

Which response do you tend to give everyone?

Who around you might need something different?

### **RESPOND**

Identify one person who may be discouraged, weak, overwhelmed, or wandering and prayerfully consider how you can respond appropriately.

## **DAY 4 — The God Who Makes Us Holy**

### **READ**

#### **1 Thessalonians 5:19–24**

Paul has spent much of the letter calling these Christians toward greater faithfulness. Now notice where his confidence ultimately rests.

### **LOOK**

1. What commands appear in verses 19–22?
2. What does Paul ask God Himself to do in verse 23?
3. Who is responsible for calling them?
4. Read verse 24 slowly:

“The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”

How does that statement change the way you hear all the commands that came before it?

## **CONNECT**

Read **Philippians 1:6 and 2:12–13**.

Notice the tension:

**We faithfully respond. God faithfully works.**

How do these passages protect Christian growth from becoming either passive or merely self-improvement?

## **REFLECT**

Where have you been trying to change yourself without depending upon the God who is actually able to transform you?

## **RESPOND**

Surrender that area to God.

Ask Him to continue the work He has begun in you.

## **DAY 5 — Life Together**

### **READ**

#### **The Entire Letter of 1 Thessalonians**

The whole letter can be read in one sitting.

This time, don't stop to answer questions along the way. Read it as a letter written by a pastor and his companions to people they deeply love.

As you read, mark or notice:

**Faith**

**Love**

**Hope**

**Brothers and sisters**

**Imitation**

**Encouragement**

**Holiness**

**One another**

**Together**

**The return of Jesus**

### **LOOK BACK**

Return to 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

**Faith → Work**

**Love → Labor**

**Hope → Endurance**

Then read 5:8.

What has Paul returned to near the end of the letter?

What have you learned about **faith, love, and hope** between those two passages?

## **CONNECT**

Read **John 13:34–35** and **Acts 2:42–47**.

How does the picture of Christian community in these passages complement what you have discovered in Thessalonica?

## **PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER**

Return to the question from the beginning of this journey:

**What does it look like to live together as the people of Jesus while we wait for the return of Jesus?**

Now consider:

**What has God taught me about the gospel?**

**What has God taught me about His church?**

**Where have I seen Him growing me “more and more”?**

**Who has God used to encourage my faith?**

**Whose life am I intentionally investing in?**

**Where could I make more room in my life for others?**

**Who might need encouragement from me right now?**

**What do I want our life together to show the world about Jesus?**

### **A FINAL PRAYER**

Father, thank You for calling us to Yourself and calling us into a people. Increase our faith, deepen our love, and strengthen our hope. Teach us to share not only the gospel but our lives with one another. Make us holy as You are holy. Teach us to encourage the discouraged, help the weak, practice patience, open our lives to others, and faithfully follow Jesus in the ordinary places You have put us. Let our life together make the good news of Jesus visible to the world around us. And as we wait for the return of Your Son, continue Your work in us—more and more. You are faithful, and You will do it. Amen.