



1 & 2 Thessalonians

Excel in Christ

Sample Lesson #1
and
Leader's Guide Answers

1: The Life-Changing Word

Read—Introduction, 1 Thessalonians 1, other Scripture references as given.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 Paul introduces himself, Silvanus (also called Silas), and Timothy and offers a standard New Testament greeting (v. 1). Then Paul expresses profound gratitude for the Thessalonian believers' faith (vs. 3–4) and reminds them of the amazing life transformation that took place in their lives. In doing so, the apostle identifies three key principles that will enable every believer to become spiritually mature (vs. 5–10). He concludes the first chapter, as he does in all five chapters of 1 Thessalonians, with a reference to Christ's return.

Before you begin, ask God to reveal Himself through His Word and transform you into the image of His Son.

1. a. What dramatic spiritual event took place in Paul's life that eventually led him and his missionary companions to redirect their efforts to Europe which eventually brought them into contact with the Thessalonians (Acts 16:9–10)?

b. Rather than Paul telling his missionary companions what he saw and soliciting their cooperation, he informed them what he saw and sought their spiritual input (Acts 16:10). What important principle did Paul remember when he asked his companions to discern the meaning of the vision (Proverbs 1:5; 12:15; 20:18)?
2. a. Paul praised the Thessalonian believers for their faithfulness to God. List the spiritual qualities he was grateful to see being developed in their lives and circle the one you would most like to see developed in your life (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

b. The trilogy of faith, hope, and love are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:8). What *do you think* is the meaning of each of the phrases?
 1. **Work of faith** (1 Thessalonians 1:3; John 6:29)
 2. **Labor of love** (Galatians 4:19)
 3. **Patience of hope** (James 1:6–8)
3. Paul's letter must have been a real blessing to these young believers. When was the last time you attempted to encourage another believer, especially a young Christian, and what was their reaction to your encouragement? Be prepared to share some brief details of the event.
4. The Thessalonians were radically changed when Paul and his fellow workers preached the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 1:5–6). Their proclamation of the Word was attended with **power, in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance**. What *do you think* is the meaning of these three important phrases as they relate to the effective proclamation of God's Word?
 - a. **in power:**
 - b. **in the Holy Spirit:**
 - c. **in much assurance:**
5. a. What did Paul tell the Roman believers about the power of the gospel to change lives (Romans 1:16)?

- b. Why did Paul make the proclamation of God's Word such a priority when he first preached to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 2:1–5)?
6. a. God's Word, proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, changes lives. In fact, it is the only thing that really changes lives at the heart level. *Why do you think* more Christians, including some Christian leaders, don't place a greater emphasis on the preaching and teaching of God's Word?
- b. What do some things religious teachers preach and teach in place of God's Word (Mark 7:5–7; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 1 Timothy 1:3–8, 2 Timothy 4:4; 2 Peter 1:16)?
- c. What can you (and every Christian) do to help all Christian leaders faithfully proclaim God's Word (Ephesians 6:18–20)?
7. a. Give at least four evidences that the Thessalonians' faith was genuine (1 Thessalonians 1:6–8).
1. _____ (v. ____)
2. _____ (v. ____)
3. _____ (v. ____)
4. _____ (v. ____)
- b. What three things did the believers in Achaia and Macedonia know about the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10)?
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
8. What specific changes could you make to be a better witness and a more faithful disciple of Jesus Christ?
9. The Thessalonian church was a blessing to the apostle Paul. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, however, he rebuked the church for being: (1) factious (1 Corinthians 1:10–15), (2), carnal (1 Corinthians 3:1–4), (3) immoral and prideful (1 Corinthians 5:1–8), (4) litigious (1 Corinthians 6:1–11), (5) unfaithful to their marriage vows (1 Corinthians 7:1–5), (6) hypocritical (1 Corinthians 11:17–22), and (7) self-centered (1 Corinthians 14:6–20). Paul told the Corinthians to examine or test themselves. What did Paul want them to determine (2 Corinthians 13:5)?
10. Perhaps some within the Corinthian church wondered how they could examine or test their faith. The book of 1 John provides a fivefold spiritual test that helps you determine if your faith is genuine, saving faith. The apostle John said, **These things I have written to you who believe...that you may know that you have eternal life** (1 John 5:13).
- a. Study the following verses carefully. List the five evidences of genuine, saving faith (1 John 2:3; 3:9, 14; 5:1, 4). Note: These five evidences are the proofs of saving faith, *not* the means of salvation.)
1. 1 John 2:3: _____
2. 1 John 3:9: _____
3. 1 John 3:14: _____
4. 1 John 5:1: _____
5. 1 John 5:4: _____
- b. Does your faith pass the biblical test of genuine, saving faith? YES NO I'M NOT SURE
If you didn't pass the test, or you are still uncertain about your relationship with God, turn to the back of this study guide and read the Final Exam. It will explain how to receive God's gift of eternal life.

1 The Life-Changing Word

1.
 - a. Paul received a vision from God of a man from Macedonia who pleaded with the apostle to help his fellow Macedonians (Acts 16:9–10).
 - b. Only Paul received the vision, but he shared the vision with others (Silas [Acts 15:40], Timothy [Acts 16:3–4], and Luke [Acts 16:10, “we”]) and sought their counsel. Paul fulfilled the biblical principle of seeking wise counsel (Proverbs 1:5). Paul acted wisely by seeking and listening to godly counsel (Proverbs 12:15), and a wise plan was established (Proverbs 20:18). Notice the combined aspects of God’s revelation and sanctified human reason (“we concluded”) were both to discern God’s will for their lives.

2.
 - a. Paul was grateful for the faith, love, and hope that were being manifested in their lives. Answers will vary.
 - b.
 1. Believers must be diligent to trust (believe) God’s promises during the temptations to doubt, lies that undermine faith, and the spiritual attacks from others who do not believe. In this sense faith is a work.
 2. True love (Christlike love) sacrifices and labors for the physical, emotional, and spiritual advancement and salvation of others.
 3. The believer’s hope in God and His promises should be steadfast so he can, without wavering, be the recipient of God’s promises and live with a heavenly confidence.

3. Answers will vary.

4.
 - a. God’s power was manifested in and through the apostle Paul’s preaching because his life was clean from sin and he was dedicated to God’s purposes.
 - b. The Holy Spirit brought deep conviction upon the Thessalonians.
 - c. Paul’s preaching was presented as life-changing truth from God that he had embraced, not theoretical musings about spiritual speculations or man-made religious traditions.

5.
 - a. Paul said he was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ because it possessed God’s power to save everyone who believed. It did not matter if they were Jews or Gentiles. The gospel of Jesus Christ would save them. For this reason, Paul was not ashamed to proclaim it.
 - b. Paul wanted the Corinthians to have a faith that rested solely on the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:5). He didn’t want his listeners to accept the message he preached because of any perceived (human) wisdom or eloquence (1 Corinthians 2:4). In fact, said Paul, he originally preached the gospel to the Corinthians when he was emotionally drained and fearful (1 Corinthians 2:3). Notice that Paul had determined beforehand how he would preach the gospel to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 2:2). He wanted Christ, not himself or his preaching, to be the object of their faith.

6.
 - a. Answers will vary. Perhaps many preachers don’t think the people want to hear the Bible. Perhaps they don’t feel they have adequate theological training and don’t want to tell others something that is incorrect. Perhaps they are afraid that people will leave the church if they preach the truth.
 - b.
 1. Man-made religious traditions (Mark 7:5–8).
 2. The Old Testament Law of Moses as obligatory for New Testament Christians (1 Timothy 1:3–8).
 3. Religious myths and fables (2 Timothy 4:4). These are religious speculations that have no way of being substantiated or refuted.
 4. Fables (2 Peter 1:16). The Greek word (*muthos*) is used for mythical stories about gods, the creation of the world, and miraculous happenings. The same Greek word is used in 2 Timothy 4:4.
 - c. Pray for those who are proclaiming God’s Word, especially for God to give them spiritual courage to proclaim the gospel with boldness.

7.
 - a.
 1. They were following the Lord as had been taught them by the apostle Paul even though they were experiencing persecution (v. 6).
 2. They were experiencing Holy Spirit–inspired joy during their trials (v. 6).
 3. Their Christian witness was so exemplary that other believers attempted to emulate them (v. 7).
 4. Their faith was a powerful encouragement to believers in other areas of Greece (v. 8).
 - b.
 1. They received or welcomed those who proclaimed the Word of God (v. 9).
 2. They turned from idols to serve the living and true God (v. 9).
 3. They eagerly waited for and anticipated the return of Jesus Christ (v. 10).

8. Answers will vary.

9. Paul wanted the Corinthians to examine or test themselves to determine if they were saved or born again. Note that Paul never said he thought or said they were unsaved. He simply encouraged them to test themselves to determine if they were genuinely saved.
10. a.
 1. A genuine Christian keeps or obeys God's commandments (1 John 2:3).
 2. A genuine Christian doesn't continue in habitual sin (1 John 3:9).
 3. A genuine Christian loves other believers (1 John 3:14).
 4. A genuine Christian believes that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 5:1).
 5. A genuine Christian can overcome the temptation of this world because of his faith in God (1 John 5:4).
- b. Answers will vary.