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# 1Thessalonians

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## Book Background and Author

The book of **1Thessalonians** is one of Paul's letters to a church (in modern Greece) that he miraculously planted in three short weeks (**Acts 17:1-9**). The key factors in this miracle were:

- The people's full surrender to God (**1The 1:5**). They were weak while the Holy Spirit was strong.
- The people's awareness of God's Words coming through Paul (**1The 2:13**).

To set a good example, Paul chose to work for a living there and not take a salary (**1The 2:9, Php 4:14-16**).

The Thessalonians suffered greatly for their faith in Christ (**1The 3:4-5**). Paul urged them

to look forward to the return of Jesus (**1The 4:13-5:11**).

## Theme

Jesus is coming. Look for Him (**1The 4:17**) and live for Him.

## Outline

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Looking Back    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conversion: <b>1The 1</b></li><li>• Evangelism: <b>1The 2</b></li><li>• Caring: <b>1The 3</b></li></ul>                  |
| Looking Forward | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct: <b>1The 4:1-12</b></li><li>• Comfort: <b>1The 4:13-5:11</b></li><li>• Continuing: <b>1The 5:12-28</b></li></ul> |

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## Personal Reflection and Application

- Look at what Paul remembers as evidence that the Thessalonian church members were Christ followers (**1The 1:3-4**). What work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope can others see in you as evidence that you are a Christ follower?
- Where do you get strength during times of suffering (**1The 3:1-8**)?
- Are you ready for Christ's return (**1The 5:2**)?

## Small Group Conversation Guide

- Make a list of ways that others can see our faith by what we do (**1The 1:3**, **Jas 2:17-18**).
- Make a list of ways that we can demonstrate the love of Christ to others (**1The 1:3**, **Heb 6:10**).
- Paul says that the way to bring the gospel so that others are most likely to receive it is to bring it with gentleness (**1The 2:7**). Give examples of how to share the gospel with gentleness (**2Cor 10:1**, **Eph 5:29**).
- Discuss the significance of Paul sending Timothy to the Thessalonians (**1The 3:1-2**).

- Compare the following verses as you discuss Christ's return.

| John 14:3                              | 1The 4:16-17 |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|
| ...I will come again                   |              |
| and receive you to myself              |              |
| that where I am, there you may be also |              |

- Paul tells us that we have no way of knowing exactly when Christ will return (**1The 5:2**). What should we do until then?

| Verse                               | Our Action |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>1The 5:6</b><br><b>Mat 24:42</b> |            |
| <b>Col 4:5</b>                      |            |
| <b>1Pet 5:8</b>                     |            |

## Leadership Principles from 1Thessalonians

### Apprenticeship in Action

Paul trained the new believers with the idea that he would raise up leaders to replace himself. Notice how Paul describes this method of leadership training.

- ▶ Training was a combination of words and demonstration (**1The 1:5**).
- ▶ Learning occurred as they experienced real life problems (**1The 1:6**).
- ▶ They in turn trained others (**1The 1:7-8**).

How is this similar to identifying and developing an apprentice? How could you apply this method to raise up leaders?

## Earn the Privilege to Share the Gospel

Your love for people is the only thing that separates you from all the other people telling them what to do. How much time do you invest in people to earn the privilege of being able to share the gospel [1The 2:8]?

### Sacrificial Love

Consider the significance of Paul sending Timothy to the Thessalonians [1The 3:1-2]. Timothy was a key person to Paul. When Paul sent him, this was a sacrifice he made out of love for the Thessalonians. When you have a key person, how resistant are you to sending that person away to help someone else? What factors do you consider when deciding whether to send the person?

### Focus on the Future

Paul ended his letter with a focus on the future. He knew that hope for the future gave power in the present. Notice what that future focus does.

- ▶ Comforts [1The 4:13-15]
- ▶ Gives assurance [1The 4:16-18]
- ▶ Reminds [1The 5:1-5]
- ▶ Gives direction [1The 5:6-11]

As a leader, how well do you help others focus on the future?

## How to Handle Roadblocks

Paul had a plan; however, he met some roadblocks. How do you handle roadblocks [1The 3:11-13]?

|                                                            |                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Rely on God to direct your path, but don't just sit there. | <b>1The 3:11</b>     |
| Pray!                                                      | <b>Psa 119:30-31</b> |
| Plan. Establish a personal vision.                         | <b>Pro 16:9</b>      |
| Trust God.                                                 | <b>Psa 37:3</b>      |

- ▶ What if other people are the roadblock? Remember, you can sometimes force people to do things, but you cannot change their hearts.
  - ▶ **1The 3:12**
  - ▶ **Jas 2:13**
  - ▶ **Gal 5:14**
- ▶ What if you are your own roadblock? Rely on God to change your heart.
  - ▶ **1The 3:13**
  - ▶ **Pro 4:23**
  - ▶ **1Pet 1:22**

## Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter.

|                                                      |                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 01. What changes Paul witnessed in the Thessalonians | 02. How the people of Thessalonica received God's Word |
| 03. What caused Paul to send Timothy to Thessalonica | 04. Why we have hope in our sorrow when believers die  |
| 05. What we are to do for our Christians leaders     |                                                        |