

# 1 and 2 Thessalonians: Discipleship Lessons Participant Handout Guides

If you are working with a class or small group, feel free to duplicate the following handouts at no additional charge. If you'd like to print 8-1/2" x 11" or A4 size pages, you can download the free Participant Guide handout sheets at:

[www.jesuswalk.com/thessalonians/thessalonians-lesson-handouts.pdf](http://www.jesuswalk.com/thessalonians/thessalonians-lesson-handouts.pdf)

## Discussion Questions

You'll typically find 4 to 5 questions for each lesson, depending on the topics in each lesson. Each question may include several sub-questions. These are designed to get group members engaged in discussion of the key points of the passage. If you're running short of time, feel free to skip questions or portions of questions.

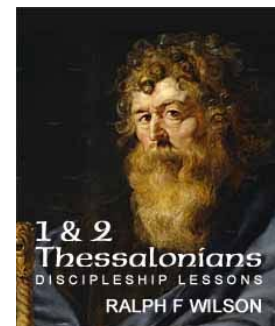
1. The Secret of Bountiful Believers (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Acts 17:1-10)
2. The Character of a Disciple-Maker (1 Thessalonians 2:1-16)
3. The Warm Heart of a Disciple-Maker (1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13)
4. The Command and Blessing of Holy Sex (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)
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9. Warning against Idleness (2 Thessalonians 3:6-18)

Because of the length of these handouts – and to keep down the page count so we can keep the book price lower – they are being made available at no cost online.

[www.jesuswalk.com/thessalonians/thessalonians-lesson-handouts.pdf](http://www.jesuswalk.com/thessalonians/thessalonians-lesson-handouts.pdf)

This series of lessons is based on *1 and 2 Thessalonians: Discipleship Lesson* by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson (JesusWalk, 2013), 148 pages. It is available for sale in paperback, Kindle, and PDF versions.  
<http://www.jesuswalk.com/books/thessalonians.htm>

If you're the teacher or facilitator for a small group or class, it is strongly recommended that you get a copy of this book for yourself and the assistant leader. It contains a huge amount of background information about 1 and 2 Thessalonians as well as notes on how to interpret the letters in light of the historical background.



## 1. The Secret of Bountiful Believers (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Acts 17:1-10)

When Paul and his mission band came to Thessalonica about 49 AD, it was one of the most important provincial capitals in the Roman Empire.

### City of Thessalonica

In 146 BC, Thessalonica became capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. In order to administer and protect its far-flung empire, Rome built a network of military highways. Thessalonica was on the Egnatian Way, completed in 146 BC, which connected Asia Minor with the Adriatic Sea (and Rome). It reached the Aegean Sea at Thessalonica. Like other major Roman roads, it was about 19.6 feet wide, paved with large polygonal stone slabs or covered with a hard layer of sand.



Thessalonica became a free city in 42 BC. Today it is known as Salonika, the second largest city of modern Greece and an important seaport.

### Date and Place of Origin

Paul goes first to Athens, then to Corinth, where he enjoys a successful 18-month ministry. During this time, Timothy visits Thessalonica and reports back to Paul good news about the church – as well as its problems. 1 Thessalonians was probably written from Corinth in the later part of 50 AD, shortly after receiving a report from Timothy after a recent visit, and 2 Thessalonians a few months later, perhaps prompted by a letter from the church.

Q1. (Acts 17:1-10) Why do you think there was so much strong opposition to Paul's ministry in Thessalonica? Why do you think Paul keeps preaching the gospel, even though there is often a violent reaction against him? Does a violent reaction to our ministry necessarily mean we should stop?

Q2. (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5) Why is the Holy Spirit's working so necessary to effective ministry? What happens when the main power behind our ministry is will-power? What is the role of miracles in Paul's evangelism? What would happen if we saw miracles in evangelism in our day? What is hindering this?

Q3. (1 Thessalonians 1:5b-6a) How important is imitation in the formation of a new Christian's spiritual life? What kinds of ministry are most conducive to imitation? Why is the character of the mentor or leader so important to the health of the church? How well do people grow in Christ who aren't part of a Christian community? In what way is *your* character important to your family and spiritual children?

Q4. (1 Thessalonians 1:10) What does verse 10 teach us about the Christian faith? Which of these elements are most important? Which are less important? Which are underemphasized by the church in our day?

## **2. The Character of a Disciple-Maker (1 Thessalonians 2:1-16)**

Q1. (1 Thessalonians 2:2) Why is personal courage such an important character trait for a disciple – and for a discipler? How does lack of courage prevent evangelism? How does lack of courage prevent a congregation from being healthy? What is God calling you to do that will require courage on your part?

Q2. (1 Thessalonians 2:3-6) Which of the character flaws mentioned in these verses is the greatest problem in the church? Why do you say that? How can you prevent one of these character flaws from overtaking you?

Q3. (1 Thessalonians 2:6b-8) Why are “motherly” nurturing qualities so important to growing disciples? How effectively can male disciplers adopt some of these traits?

Q4. (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12) Why are “fatherly” roles so important to making disciples? How effectively do you think women can adopt these traits?

Q5. (1 Thessalonians 2:13) What is the role of the Word of God in molding disciples’ lives? Does it have a power of its own? How does that seem to operate? What are the implications for disciplers of this powerful action of the Word?

### **3. The Warm Heart of a Disciple-Maker (1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13)**

Q1. (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20) How can we justify a desire for rewards for our labor in light of God's free gift of salvation and our love for him? What does Christ reward? What doesn't he reward? Why should showing accountability to our Master bring us pleasure? How does it motivate us?

Q2. (2 Thessalonians 3:2-3) Why is Timothy's role to be a strengthener and encourager so important? In what ways was this a sensitive role. How did it help Timothy to be sent on this assignment? How does delegating ministry help the overall enterprise of the Kingdom?

Q3. (1 Thessalonians 3:3-5) In what ways does persecution discourage Christians from active, open service? In what ways does it mature them? In what ways does it reveal our underlying motives? Why do you think God allows the tempter the ability to tempt us? Why hasn't he done away with Satan already?

Q4. (1 Thessalonians 3:10-11; Romans 1:11) What is the value of visits of special speakers to a congregation? What can they impart that your regular pastor can't? Why is a ministry of itinerant preaching so difficult – and important?

#### **4. The Command and Blessing of Holy Sex (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)**

Q1. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2) What is the difference between (1) conducting our lives by rules and (2) conducting our lives trying to please our God? Which is stronger? Rule-keeping or love? On whose authority does Paul bring these commands?

Q2. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4) What does it mean to be “sanctified”? In what sense are we “holy” now? In what sense are we in the process of becoming “holy”? What does holiness have to do with our sexuality?

Q3. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5) Are humans actually capable of controlling their sexual urges? If so, why are so many people seemingly out of control? Why is it important to control ourselves sexually within marriage? What happens when sexuality does not have any boundaries? What happens to marriages, to children, to our spirits, to our bodies?

Q4. (1 Thessalonians 4:6-8) Why do you think Paul mentions such severe punishments for sexual immorality? Are these punishments more severe than for other sins? What effect should these warnings have on Christians?

## **5. The Wonder and Warning of Christ's Return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11)**

Q1. (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Daniel 7:13-14) In what ways does Daniel's prophecy of the Son of Man outline Christ's return? In light of this prophecy, why did Jesus use the title "Son of Man" rather than "Christ" or "Son of God"?

Q2. (1 Thessalonians 4:14) How will Christ bring with him those believers who have previously died? According to Matthew 25:31, who will also accompany Christ when he returns?

Q3. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) According to this passage, what warning can we expect to have prior to Christ's return? What does it mean that he will "come like a thief"?

Q4. (1 Thessalonians 5:4-8) What effect should a belief in Christ's soon coming have on believers? What does it mean to be "sober" or "self-controlled" (verse 6)? What does it mean to be "alert" or "watchful" (verse 6)? How does this differ from our normal Christian lifestyle?

## 6. Keys to a Healthy Christian Community (1 Thessalonians 5:12-28)

Q1. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) What happens in a congregation when people don't show respect for their leaders? What happens when the disrespectful spread their disrespect? Will getting rid of the leader fix the problem, or is there something deeper going on here?

Q2. (1 Thessalonians 5:15) What happens to people who seek revenge on those who hurt them? What happens when they neglect to forgive those who have wronged them? What happens in a congregation that has an unloving, superior attitude towards outsiders? How do these attitudes reflect on Christ? How can people or congregations get healthy after have been vengeful, proud, or unforgiving?

Q3. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) In your own words explain how a person can rejoice and pray continually. Are there any circumstances we might be in the midst of where we should not give thanks to God?

Q4. (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22; 1 Corinthians 14) Why do churches sometimes despise or prohibit prophecy? What guidelines does Paul give here and in 1 Corinthians 14 to keep prophecy in a congregation healthy?

Q5. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) If you met a true Christian who had no assurance of salvation, how would you explain to him or her God's power to protect and present them blameless before Christ at his coming? What is the problem of having no assurance of salvation? What is the problem of having a false assurance of salvation?

## 7. Awesome Judgment at Christ's Coming (2 Thessalonians 1:1-12)

Q1. (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5) In what ways do persecution, pressure, and stress help us grow strong in Christ? What would we be like without the testing of our faith?

Q2. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7) Would God be just if he did *not* punish sin? What is the difference between rehabilitation and retribution? When does a Christian's rehabilitation take place? When does a sinner's retribution take place? How do you balance love and justice?

Q3. (2 Thessalonians 1:9) According to verse 9, what kind of punishment will unbelievers experience? One definition of "hell" is "a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked." What parts of this definition are confirmed in verse 9. Which parts of the definition trouble you? Why?

Q4. (2 Thessalonians 1:9) How might you describe Christ's glory? How will his glory be terrifying to unbelievers? If heaven involves sharing this glory forever, what would it be like to be excluded forever from the glory? In what ways is the phrase "outer darkness" a helpful description of hell?



## **8. The Coming Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3:5)**

Q1. (1 Thessalonians 2:1-3) In what way were the Thessalonians confused? What is the order of Christ's coming in relation to the revealing of the Antichrist?

Q2. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-5; Revelation 13:5-8) What are the characteristics of the Antichrist that Paul gives in this passage? What does Revelation 13:5-8 add to our basic understanding?

Q3. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12) What makes people so gullible that they believe the Antichrist's deceptions? What is the reason that God gives them over to this deception? Why is a fearless seeking of God's truth so important to us? How can a preaching of the truth set people free?

Q4. (2 Thessalonians 3:1-5) Why is perseverance so important as we see wickedness increasing? What happens if we stop believing and being patient? How can we help one another persevere? What part does faith and perseverance have in our salvation? What part does God's redemption and grace have in our salvation?

## 9. Warning against Idleness (2 Thessalonians 3:6-18)

Q1. (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15) What does the Bible teach about sloth and idleness among those who *can* work but refuse to? Summarize it briefly. What is our Christian duty?

Q2. (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9) What kind of example did Paul set with regard to work when he was in Thessalonica? As a Christian worker, did he have a right to support? Why didn't he exercise that right?

Q3. (2 Thessalonians 3:10) If we were to follow Paul's rule, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat," wouldn't that allow people to starve? It sounds harsh. What are the positive results of this rule? To whom in a Christian community would this rule apply. To whom would it *not* apply?

Q4. (2 Thessalonians 3:9-16) Why do so many churches avoid exercising any church discipline? What is the result of a thoughtful and appropriate application of church discipline? What is the result of neglect of church discipline?