

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

1. How does the community judge whether or not a church is “successful”? How should Christians judge the success of a church?
2. Thessalonica was a city in Macedonia (modern day Greece). Read about Paul’s visit to them in Acts 17:1-15. From this passage, what things can we discern about the church in Thessalonica? Given the circumstances surrounding the formation of the church, how well do you think the church will be doing a few months on?
3. Read 1 Thes 1:1-10.
4. Paul gives us some clear answers to how the church is doing. Briefly, what does he tell us in:
 - a. v2
 - b. v6
 - c. v7&8
 - d. v9&10

Now to look into the detail.....

5. Compare v1 with 1 Cor 1:2a (first phrase); how are both these ways of describing a church true?
6. In verse 3 & 4 Paul uses the triad of faith, love and hope to describe the Thessalonians. Why are these three things important in the Christian life? How does Paul see them at work in the Thessalonians?
7. Paul reminds the Thessalonians they were chosen. What implications does this have for Christians?
8. In v8 Paul exclaims: “The Lord’s message rang out from you”. What do you think he means? How has this happened?
9. Look at v9-10, what three actions does Paul say marked the Thessalonians conversion? Are we (as a church or individuals) in danger of minimalizing any of these components? If so which and why?
10. Paul touches on several points of doctrine in this short passage. What points of doctrine can you find?
11. After reading v1-10, how would you summarise God’s strategic plan for the gospel? Discuss and pray about our role in this plan.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

1. Can you think of a time when you have been falsely accused of something? What were your feelings at the time? How did you react?
2. Chapters 2 & 3 of 1 Thessalonians revolve around Paul defending his ministry to the Thessalonians. This week he defends his conduct at Thessalonica – read 1 Thes 2:1-16.
3. Obviously Paul is defending himself against some mud-slingers. From the passage what can you deduce his accusers were saying? What basis for saying these things would they have had (recall Acts 17:1-15)?
4. How does Paul judge success (v1-2)?
5. Read Acts 16:19-24, what had happened to Paul in Philippi? How does it make his visit with the Thessalonians more remarkable?
6. Several times Paul appeals to the Thessalonians on the basis of what they 'know' (v1, v2, v5, v10, v11). What does this say about Paul's ministry/actions among the Thessalonians?
7. In this passage Paul assumes 3 different roles/personas. What are they, and how does Paul fit these roles (v4-11)?
8. How would you describe the tone of Paul's words in v14-16? What possible meanings could "The wrath of God has come upon them" have?
9. Contrast Paul's words in v14-16 with Rom 9:1-3 and Rom 10:1. How do you reconcile these two attitudes?
10. Two key elements of Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians are truth and love, discuss whether you think these two pillars are difficult to balance for today's church leaders.

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

1. The preacher Spurgeon said “faith is not known to be firm and strong until it is put to the test and exercised” Sermon #3344. Do you agree – why or why not?
2. In this passage Paul rebuts the criticism that he abandoned the Thessalonians. Read 2:17-3:13 and find the five main points of his rebuttal.
 - a. 2:17a
 - b. 2:17b-20
 - c. 3:1-5
 - d. 3:6-10
 - e. 3:11-13

Turn now to some of the details within the passage.....

3. In verse 19 Paul describes the Thessalonians as “the crown in which we will glory”, what does he mean?
4. Why were the Thessalonians destined for trials (v3-4)? Does the same apply to us today? Why or why not?
5. What are the signs or characteristics of someone who is “standing firm in the Lord” (v8)?
6. How does Paul feel about the Thessalonians? How is it reflected in his writing? How can we understand such strong emotions? To what human relationship do we usually subscribe such strong feelings?
7. What was Timothy meant to do when he visited the Thessalonians? What do you think it cost Paul to send Timothy to visit the Thessalonians (see 3:7)?
8. Twice in this passage Paul mentions Satan (2:18 & 3:5). How does Paul see Satan acting against the Thessalonian Christians?
9. Several times in I Thess Paul talks about prayer and the constancy of it. See 1:2, 2:13, 3:10, 5:17, 5:25. How is it possible to be praying continually, what does this mean? How can we find Paul’s continual prayers encouraging and not disheartening (at our own failure to pray)?
10. Pray for those you minister to or those close to you that they may stand firm in the Lord (consider Paul’s priorities for prayer for the Thessalonians).

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

1. The Bible tells us we are saved through God's grace by faith in Jesus Christ, do you think we sometimes take this as a licence to "go soft" on sin in our lives?
2. We are now moving into the second part of Paul's letter. In chapters 1-3 Paul has looked back over his time with the Thessalonians and what has happened since he left. Paul now moves on to instructions to the Thessalonians. Read 1 Thes 4:1-12.
3. What is the difference between 'living to please God' (v1), and obeying rules (the law)?
4. By whose authority does Paul claim to instruct the Thessalonians? Why is this important?
5. Paul is not afraid to offer instruction on the most difficult of topics – sexually immorality. What is his clear instruction? Who is wronged by sexual immorality? What will be the result of continuing sexual immorality?
6. The Thessalonians lived in a sexually promiscuous society not unlike ourselves, how can we encourage one another (and if relevant our children) to be holy in the area of sexuality?
7. In both v1 and v10 Paul urges the Thessalonians to please God and love others more and more. What does this tell us about the Christian life?
8. Why do you think Paul felt the need to offer the instructions he does in v11 & v12. What behaviours is he discouraging?
9. Do you think Christians have a role in the secular community to promote God's standards of sexual purity? For example, should we be vocal regarding our disapproval of gay marriage?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

1. The Church has much to teach us about the way God says we should live, do you think it has a role in teaching us about death? If so, what is its role? Does it do it well?
2. Read 1 Thes 4:13-5:11
3. What does Paul tell us will happen to those who have “fallen asleep” before Jesus returns?
4. Some may say v13-17 are scarce on details and leave us with more questions. Why do you think this is so? What concern was Paul addressing?
5. Paul encourages the Thessalonians not to “grieve like the rest of men who have no hope”. Does this mean that Christian hope should lessen our grief at the loss of a loved one? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think the Thessalonians were keen to know the date and time of Jesus return? Why does Paul say it should not matter to us as Christians?
7. How are the images of a thief and a pregnant woman going into labour appropriate and clever?
8. Paul describes the Thessalonians as “sons of the light” and says they “belong to the day”. How would you explain these terms in plain English?
9. Finally, have a look back over the verses listed below. How does Paul end each chapter? What can we say is a clear theme in 1 Thessalonians?
 - a. 1:10
 - b. 2:19
 - c. 3:13
 - d. 4:16-17
 - e. 5:23
10. In 4:18 Paul calls us to “encourage each other with these words”. Discuss/pray about how we can encourage each other regarding Jesus’ return and the raising of the dead?

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

1. If the church is the body of Christ, and each person has a distinct and particular function (1 Cor 12), why do we need ministers/pastors? How do we get the balance right?

2. Read 1 Thes 5:12-28

On first reading v12-22 can seem like one long prescriptive list of how we are to live. However, we can break these verses into three sections we can form a clearer picture:

a. How to treat leaders/pastors (v12-13)

b. How to treat each other (v14-15)

c. How we worship (v16-22, 27)

3. What three expressions does Paul use to describe the local pastor/leader? What do they mean?

4. What should be the response of those sitting under their leadership?

5. In verse 14 Paul seems to return to groups of people he has already mentioned in his letter. Who are the idle, the timid and the weak? How should the church care for them?

6. Should our behaviour towards those inside our church family be any different to those outside it? Are our obligations different?

7. Paul gives some guidelines regarding Christian worship in v 16-22, 27. How well do we as church do in following these guidelines?

8. After this great long list of instructions, what encouragement can we take from v23-24?

9. As you finish studying Thessalonians, volunteer something you have learned, been challenged by, or encouraged by in Paul's letter.