

SCC Small Group
“1 Thessalonians”
Part 2 – Covering chapters 4 - 5

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By Rev. Rick Dietzman, Minister of Adult Discipleship

January 2010

Introduction to Paul's letters to the Thessalonians:

"You won't learn unless you ask questions." Countless teachers and parents have explained this truth to children through the years. Those who desire to train others and impart knowledge don't mind responding to queries. Questions help them know what students are thinking and learning. Those who don't verbalize their doubts, voice their concerns or seek to clarify what they have heard, often harbor misunderstanding, go the wrong way or live in ignorance. Paul wrote both 1 and 2 Thessalonians to answer believers' questions and to commend them on their faith and commitment to Christ.

The Thessalonians had questions. They wanted to be sure. As you walk through the topics of these small group studies, you'll see the kinds of questions they were asking and the assurances that the Apostle Paul gives. These are the same kinds of questions we are asking today. We'll tackle fourteen areas where people are looking for assurance as we encounter 1 and 2 Thessalonians over the coming months.

The letters to the Thessalonians were written from Corinth around AD 51. They are among Paul's earliest letters (some think they were his first ones to a local church). As you saw in Session 1, the story started in Acts 17 when Paul came to this bustling seaport (with a population of about 200,000 people) after leaving Philippi and stayed a little over three weeks there. In that short amount of time a church was formed, but Paul and his companions were soon forced to leave. Since Paul could not physically return and help this young congregation personally, he sent Timothy to check in on them, and penned these two letters to help them along in their faith.

Chapters 1-3 dealt with confidence in our personal walk of faith, the next two chapters look ahead to the future of the church. In all of this, Paul affirms that effective faith should show itself in every area of a believer's life.

Session 6: Being sure of God's Approval 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

By Rev. Rick Dietzman, Minister of Adult Discipleship January 2010

Opener: We all have memories when we have had to face disapproval. Share one and how it affected you.

Approval is something that must be earned, and it is granted because of what a person does. God will always love us, but he may not always approve of our way of living. In this passage Paul talks about how to live in such a way to please God, and he lays out God's expectations.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2 (New Living Translation)

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You live this way already, and we encourage you to do so even more. For you remember what we taught you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

1. In your own life, what have been some specific actions or life choices that you believe have pleased God?
2. Why is it so important to keep reminding each other of how we should live? How have other people's encouragement helped you in this way?

There are many passages in the New Testament in which Paul describes what pleases God. Here are a few.

Romans 14:17-18 (New Living Translation)

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.

Colossians 1:9-11 (New Living Translation)

We have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.

3. Based on these two passages, list the various ways Paul defines pleasing God.

4. Why is it important to strive to live a life “worthy of the Lord”?

Now Paul addresses a very specific sin that the Thessalonians were dealing with, and which was hindering many of them from pleasing God. Not surprisingly, it is an area that our society struggles with as well.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (New Living Translation)

³ God’s will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. ⁴ Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor—⁵ not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways. ⁶ Never harm or cheat a Christian brother in this matter by violating his wife, for the Lord avenges all such sins, as we have solemnly warned you before. ⁷ God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives. ⁸ Therefore, anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human teaching but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

5. What images (positive or negative) does living a holy life bring to mind? Is it constraining or exciting?

6. What cautions might Paul give to the church today in the area of sexuality? Anything different than is written here?

7. In verse 8 Paul says that those who refuse to “live by these rules” are rejecting God. What does this tell you about the seriousness and effects of sexual sin?

Paul now switches gears and moves from the topic of sexual purity to basic lifestyle choices that would set these Christians apart in an attractive way and lead unbelievers to respect them.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 (New Living Translation)

⁹ But we don't need to write to you about the importance of loving each other, for God himself has taught you to love one another. ¹⁰ Indeed, you already show your love for all the believers throughout Macedonia. Even so, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you to love them even more. ¹¹ Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. ¹² Then people who are not Christians will respect the way you live (literally: you will act honestly toward them), and you will not be in any need.

8. Paul's advice is to continue to create a caring community which provides for one another and is a positive example to all. Talk about some ways our own church family could continue to live out these principles.

9. Of all the areas talked about in this study:
- Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit
 - Being filled with the knowledge of God's will
 - Bearing fruit in every good work
 - Avoiding sexual immorality
 - Living a quiet life of honest work and service to others

Which one of these struck you the most as something you'd like to grow in or focus on right now as you seek to honor God with your life?

Group Prayer Time: In this session we've talked about being sure of God's approval. Reflect on anything that struck you as a growth area, and if you feel comfortable, share that with the group. Spend some time praying together and note how God has been at work in your lives. Pray also for any needs you are facing in the group.

For Personal Reflection on your own:

- A. Do you feel God's approval or disapproval right now? Write down what comes to mind.

- B. How are you doing in terms of your own sexual purity? Is there anything God brought to your mind during this study?

Digging Deeper: for those who wish to do more study on this topic.

What the Bible says about God's approval and how to please Him. Look up the following verses and note what they say. Circle anything you hadn't noticed before.

Proverbs 16:5-7

John 6:27-29

Romans 8:8, 12:1-2

Galatians 1:10

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

2 Corinthians 10:17-18

2 Corinthians 13:5-8

Ephesians 5:8-10

1 Thessalonians 2:4

1 Timothy 5:4

2 Timothy 2:15

Hebrews 11:6, 13:20-21

James 1:12

Session 7: Being sure of Jesus' Return 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

By Rev. Rick Dietzman, Minister of Adult Discipleship January 2010

Opener: What feelings or thoughts come over you when you think about Christians you know who have died?

At this point in the letter, Paul begins to teach about the future. He reminds the believers that Jesus who had died, arose, and ascended would one day come back again. Paul also addresses questions about what happens to people who die before his return. Whenever the Bible teaches about Christ's return it is done in two parts. The first one deals with the assurance of victory over death which we will examine in this session. The second deals with how to be ready, which we will talk about in session 8.

First we begin with what 1 Thessalonians 4:13 says:

And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

1. Do you know any Christians who inspired you by how they faced death in their final days? How?

2. In what ways is a Christian's grief different than a nonbeliever's? What are the spiritual dangers of ignorance about life after death?

Paul goes on to describe why believers in Jesus can be rock solid in their hope.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 (New Living Translation)

¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. ¹⁵ We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. ¹⁷ Then,

*together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.*¹⁸ So encourage each other with these words.

3. What reasons do you see here for Christians to have hope?

One of the questions people often ask is: where do we go when we die? In verse 14 Paul says that Jesus will bring back with him the believers who have died. It also mentions raising the dead from their graves, and having believers who are alive caught up in the clouds. It helps to see what Paul says about that interim state elsewhere in the Bible.

Philippians 1:21-24 (New Living Translation)

*For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. I'm torn between two desires: **I long to go and be with Christ**, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.*

2 Corinthians 5:8 (New Living Translation)

*We would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then **we will be at home with the Lord.***

4. Other places in the Bible describe this waiting state as “falling asleep in Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:18 NIV). What do you imagine that will be like?

5. Can you think of some reasons why the state of death could be compared to sleep?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:21-26 (New Living Translation)

²¹ So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. ²² Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. ²³ But there is an order to this resurrection: **Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.** ²⁴ After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. ²⁵ For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. ²⁶ And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

6. As you can see from a comparison of 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-26, a sequence or order emerges for how things will play out in the end. Is this how you have conceptualized “heaven” to be, or have you previously had another picture in your mind?

7. Based on 1 Corinthians 15:22-26, how does the resurrection of Christ relate to our own victory over death?

8. Have you ever wondered what your resurrection body might be like? See the digging deeper section for a description and comment on what you learn.

This passage in Thessalonians speaks dramatically of how the second coming of Jesus is announced with shouts and a trumpet, something Jesus himself described in the gospel of Matthew.

Read Matthew 24:30-31 (New International Version)

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Revelation 10:7 (New International Version)

In the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

Revelation 11:15 (New International Version)

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever."

9. How does the finality of this event and the fact that all believers in Christ through the ages “will be together with the Lord forever” strengthen and motivate you?

Group Prayer Time: In this session we’ve taken a closer look at that assurance of Jesus’ return and our hope in the face of death. We can be sure that Christ is coming back to bring everything to a conclusion. Next week we will continue our discussion about how we can ready for that event. Thank God together for how he has provided for believers, both the living and the dead with these tremendous promises. Pray also for any other needs that people mention in the group.

For Personal Reflection on your own:

- A. Who in your life are you concerned about right now, that they would have this kind of hope?

- B. What might you do to communicate this truth to them?

Digging Deeper: for those who wish to do more study on this topic.

The subject of “the rapture” or being caught up with Christ in the last days is a fascinating topic. People have discussed it for thousands of years. Some see it is an escape route from suffering and others stress that it is the final event of history on the day of the Lord, the day of judgment. In our generation, we tend to look at current events, signs of the times, wondering about years of tribulation and when this event will occur (before, during or after). Interestingly, the Thessalonian church never envisioned the rapture in the way we do in this century. Their question was primarily about what happens to believers when they die, and do they miss out on the kingdom of God in some way. What Paul is describing here is a great re-union. Those who have fallen asleep return with Jesus, and are reunited with the living. Paul also addressed a

subject that confounded everyone who was originally taught it, skeptics and believers alike. That was, how does a person get a resurrected body when their natural one has decayed, turned to dust, or even been cremated. Paul gives a very clear and helpful explanation in the letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:35-55 (New Living Translation)

The Resurrection Body

³⁵ *But someone may ask, “How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?”*³⁶ *What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn’t grow into a plant unless it dies first.*³⁷ *And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting.*³⁸ *Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed.*³⁹ *Similarly there are different kinds of flesh—one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.*

⁴⁰ *There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies.*⁴¹ *The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory.*

⁴² *It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever.*⁴³ *Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength.*⁴⁴ *They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.*

⁴⁵ *The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.” But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit.*⁴⁶ *What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later.*⁴⁷ *Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven.*⁴⁸ *Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man.*⁴⁹ *Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.*

⁵⁰ *What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.*

⁵¹ *But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed!*⁵² *It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.*⁵³ *For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.*

⁵⁴ Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.
⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”*

Q: Give some examples in nature of how transformation occurs in death

Q: Have you ever thought of the “the rapture” in terms of a split second transformation at the very end of time? Is this new to you?

Q: How emotionally attached are you to your physical body? What is this passage saying about that?

Opener: What place does the expectation of Christ's return play in your life? Do you think about it frequently or imagine what it will be like?

The Late Great Planet Earth was a popular book written in the 1970's by Hal Lindsay which talked about the end times in terms of modern events, and pointed to an end date in the near future. When I was in high school in the 1980's, a film came out called "Thief in the night" which centered upon what would happen when the rapture occurred, and how it might have felt to have been left behind in that event. During the past fifteen years no less than 16 novels have been published in the *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, dealing with the end times. Suffice to say, speculation is rampant about what may happen, and many ask: How much can I know, and how can I be ready?

In this passage, Paul discusses how to be ready for the day of the Lord, the day of judgment.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 (New Living Translation)

Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters, we don't really need to write you. For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

The first question people tend to ask today is, why has Jesus' coming been delayed so long, especially since Paul wrote about it like it was imminent. An explanation for this is found in the following:

2 Peter 3:7-9 (New Living Translation)

The present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

Jesus gave a window of time for the good news of Jesus to go out into the world, and he is counting down the time for this to be completed. As it says in Matthew 24:14

The Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all ethnic groups will hear it; and then the end will come.

1. If you think about it, has the two thousand year delay in Jesus' coming made you doubt the Bible or has it motivated you to live out your faith?

Another thing about the second coming that has been with the church from the beginning is the tendency to speculate about when it will occur. About every 10 years or so, someone starts a movement to predict that the end is near based on world events. The idea seems to be if we are aware of the signs, then we are prepared and won't be surprised.

2. Think back over your lifetime, how many times has the subject of the Lord's imminent return been promoted by a prominent personality or author? How has the fallout of that affected your trust in the next person who raises the subject?
3. Why do you suppose that people love to forecast the date of Christ's return? How does the mystery of that event motivate you?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11 (New Living Translation)

⁴ But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night. ⁶ So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded. ⁷ Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk. ⁸ But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation. ⁹ For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. ¹⁰ Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. ¹¹ So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

4. Do you think awareness and speculation is the same thing as being prepared? If not, what is the difference?

Note what Paul says about how to be “clearheaded”.

Matthew 24:36-47 lays out the second coming in similar terminology to 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. Read the following and compare them.

Matthew 24:36-47 (New Living Translation)

No one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. ³⁷ “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. ³⁸ In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. ³⁹ People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. ⁴⁰ “Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. ⁴² “So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected. ⁴⁵ “A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. ⁴⁶ If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. ⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.

5. Referring to Matthew 24:36, why do you suppose the return date is such a secret that only the Father knows, and not Jesus or the angels? What should that tell us about our trying to specify or predict it?

6. What do the following analogies say to you about the second coming?

Like a Thief (1 Thessalonians 5:2, and Matthew 24:42)

Like a pregnant woman's labor pains (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

Like Noah's day (Matthew 24:37-39)

Clearly, the coming of Jesus will be swift and unexpected, so preparation is necessary. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 talks about staying awake and watchful. While we wait...here's what the Bible says we should do:

Titus 2:12-13 (New International Version)

Say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:13-15 (New International Version)

Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

1 Peter 4:7-10 (New International Version)

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

2 Peter 3:11-14 (New International Version)

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

7. Based on these verses, how can one best prepare and be watchful?

8. Sometimes it's easy to bemoan the situation of the world and retreat from society. "It's all going to be destroyed anyway, let's just get out of the way and wait for Jesus to come back." Is there a different attitude in these passages?

9. How could you yourself commit to being active in these days of waiting for Jesus – serving, sharing your faith, and in essence speeding His coming?

Group Prayer Time: In this session we've talked about being sure we are prepared for Jesus coming. Pray. The Bible makes it clear how we should live in anticipation of that day. Pray for each other that you will be active in living a life of faith in a hopeful and expectant manner. Pray also for any needs you are facing in the group.

For Personal Reflection on your own:

- A. Do you feel completely ready for Jesus to come back? If you hesitate some way in your thoughts, what do you think is the struggle?

- B. What is one new action or attitude you would like to apply as a result of this study?

Digging Deeper: for those who wish to do more study on this topic.

The Day of the Lord is a special event at the end of time when God's will and purpose for humanity and His world will be fulfilled. Amos 5:18-20 is probably the earliest occurrence in Scripture of the phrase, "Day of the Lord." According to Amos, that day

would be a time of great darkness for any in rebellion against God. The day would be a time of judgment (Isaiah 13:6,9; Jeremiah. 46:10), as well as restoration (Isaiah 14:1; Joel 2:28-32). In the New Testament, the “Day of Christ” is described as the period at the end of time when Jesus will return to claim faithful believers and members of His church as His own (1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:10).

Go through the following passages paying attention to special characteristics of this “day”:

Isaiah 2:12, 3:6-9, 14:1

Jeremiah 46:10

Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3

Joel 1:15, 2:28-32

Amos 5:18

Zephaniah 1:7, 14

Mark 13:26-27

John 6:39-40

Acts 2:19-21

Romans 2:5-11

1 Corinthians 1:8

2 Corinthians 1:14

Ephesians 4:30

Philippians 1:6-10

Revelation 1:7-8

Session 9: Being sure of our Commitments 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

By Rev. Rick Dietzman, Minister of Adult Discipleship January 2010

Opener: Describe a time in the past year, when a Christian helped you and showed their commitment to you.

In this final section of 1 Thessalonians, Paul ends his discussion of the end times and the coming of Jesus and refocuses on how the believers should live their lives in a way that shows their dedication to one another, as they wait for Jesus' return.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (New Living Translation)

Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.

1. What have you done (or could you do) to show this kind of respect to your leaders?
2. Why does it mention living peacefully with each other? Why do pastors and members of the congregation sometimes struggle with this?
3. How do Paul's instructions keep both leaders and members of the church from "lording it over" each other?

This final lesson in the series has fewer questions because we would like to give time for you to appreciate and honor each other in the group. Have each person take the “hot seat “ for a few minutes, and have some of the others in the group share observations about what they have seen in the person and appreciate about them in the time you have known them. We often have a powerful effect on others we don’t even realize, and this chapter of 1 Thessalonians is all about affirming and being an encouragement to each other. Instead of praying around the circle etc at the end of your study time, take time for a few people to pray a prayer of blessing for the person in the “hot seat” after others have shared, and then go to the next person.

NOTE: If your group is large and you want to make sure you will have enough time, just read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 aloud at the beginning of your small group, and then start right away with this exercise. Then do the study questions with the time you have remaining at the end. Also, not everyone needs to say something about each person.

For Personal Reflection on your own:

- A. Look through this passage again and note what is most pleasing and displeasing to God.

- B. Who in your life right now needs your support and patience?

Digging Deeper: for those who wish to do more study on this topic.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Paul talks about, “taking tender care of those who are weak.” Read through the following passages on this subject, noting what is important to God.

Luke 5:29-32

Acts 20:35

Romans 8:3-4

Romans 14:1-4

Romans 15:1-4

1 Corinthians 8:8-13

1 Corinthians 9:21-23

James 5:14

Q: What kind of attitude is God asking us to have?

Q: Is there anyone you have been looking down upon?

If so, what might you do now to help them instead of criticize them?

Resources referred to in the creation of this small group study

Serendipity Bible for study groups

Life Application New Testament Commentary

NIV Study Bible

Thessalonians – How can I be sure? LifeGuide Bible study by Inter Varsity Press

1 Thessalonians Life Change Bible study by Nav Press

1 & 2 Thessalonians Bible Study by N.T. Wright

1 & 2 Thessalonians Bible Study – Living in the End Times by John Stott