

A close-up photograph of a branch with several pink roses. The roses are in various stages of bloom, with some showing vibrant pink and others a lighter, almost white, hue. The leaves are green and serrated. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blur of more roses and foliage, creating a dreamy, ethereal atmosphere.

• RESOUNDING  
*joy.*

A STUDY OF  
2 THESSALONIANS

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Project Twelve Collective for Salt+Clay

Authors: Carol Allen, Shannon Davidson, Sheri Fetner, Bev Merwin, Lori Moe, Kelley Visca,  
Kara Whalley

Cover Photo: Shannon Davidson

Edited by: Kelly Ehrhart, Allison Martin, Dianne Sanborn, Gina Vaughn

Photography and Design: Danielle Stickel

Contributing Layout Editor: Katy House

Peace is not the same as quiet.

Peace is not the same as calm.

Peace is not something  
the world can offer.

Peace is given.

From the one who is the Prince of Peace.

His Peace is available to everyone  
who will receive it.

*His name is Jesus.*

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May God  
our Father  
and the Lord  
Jesus Christ  
give you grace  
and peace.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:2 NLT

# Introduction

## About the Study

Our faith is best lived out in community. That's how God intended it. Not only for our individual growth and encouragement but also for the strength and maturity of the corporate body of believers, the Church. Our study on Thessalonians that we are calling *Resounding Joy* is designed for both interactive personal study and group discussion. It is our desire that the interactive questions and group time together weekly will help enhance your learning and application of the Scriptures.

No matter where this study finds you today, we want you to know that we understand busy schedules and the demanding roles that are required of you. It's for that very reason that we've decided to offer you options for your own level of participation in this study.

### Level 1: Participate in the Teaching only

Too many times I've watched women drop out of Bible study because they couldn't keep up with the homework. The main goal isn't that every page of homework is complete. The goal is to get you into the Word of God and a little is better than none at all. So even if you can't get to even one question, still come each week to hear the teaching and be a part of fellowship in group time. You will never regret it.

### Level 2: Participate in the Teaching + handwrite the book of 2 Thessalonians



Another option for you if you can't get to the questions each week is to write out the passage of Scripture that we will be studying. As you write out those precious living words of Scripture pray and ask God to speak to you through that exercise of writing.

### Level 3: Participate in the Teaching + handwrite the book of 2 Thessalonians + do the weekly homework

Moving up to this level in which you meet with God on the pages of Scripture numerous times each week with exponentially increase your experience. When you turn to the last page, you will truly know this letter inside and out!

### Level 4: Dig Deeper

You can also go deeper each week with the Dig Deeper option throughout the study.

Ok, sweet one, which level seems the most doable for you right now?



1

2

3

4

I'm asking you up front because I'd like to challenge you to go one level above what seems reasonably attainable. If you're willing stretch yourself one more level. We have nothing to lose here but much Scripture to gain. Do only what blesses and not what burdens.

So with that...let's get started shall we?





WEEK

# one

by Carol Allen and Sheri Fetner



## Thanksgiving and Encouragement in Persecution

*The Thessalonian Believers Are Commended*

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

**Prayer:** *Father in heaven, I ask you to speak to me and help me to follow the example of the Thessalonians' faith, love, perseverance and growth. Help me to be an encourager to others who are standing firm in the midst of various trials and tribulations.*

Today's study will focus on the following verses, which you can write at the end of your workbook if you so desire:

*Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4 (NIV).*

The second letter to the Thessalonians was written by Paul from Corinth on behalf of himself, Silas, and Timothy in approximately 51 A.D. Paul begins his letter with gratitude to God along with affirmation and encouragement to those in Thessalonica who were persevering in the midst of persecution.

**To fully understand exactly what persecution is, look up the definition in a dictionary and write it here.**

Open Doors, a non-profit organization committed to helping people throughout the world who are experiencing persecution, defines persecution as "Hostility experienced as a result of identification with Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

The early church experienced significant persecution from the very start. The book of Acts records many of the hardships of the disciples and those spreading the gospel. **Read Acts 4:1-3 which describes an early incident of persecution.**

Peter and John were arrested for teaching the gospel, but that was just the beginning. Stephen, the first Christian to die for his faith, is described in Acts 6:8 (NIV) as "a man full of God's grace and pow-

er," who *"performed great wonders and signs among the people."* The Jews brought Stephen to the Sanhedrin and produced false witnesses to testify against him. The Holy Spirit anointed Stephen, and he powerfully shared the history of God's work among His chosen people with the high Priest and other members of the Sanhedrin. **Read Acts 7:54-60 to learn the historical result of Stephen's evangelism.**

Stephen went to his death demonstrating a deep love for Jesus and forgiveness for those who had taken his life. The book of Acts goes on to describe many other instances of persecution of the early church. So how, exactly, were the Thessalonians experiencing persecution?

**Read Acts 17:1-9 and summarize what took place in Thessalonica.**

Persecution of the church at Thessalonica began from the time the church was first established as described in Acts 17, and it continued. Note that the first thing Paul wants to express to the Thessalonians is his sincere thankfulness to God for them.

**According to 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4, what was Paul thankful for?**

Paul also shares how proud he is of the Thessalonians. He even boasted about them among the other churches, as they were the model church, growing in faith and love despite persecution. A specific description of the persecution the Thessalonians were suffering at that time is not revealed to us. The book of Acts, however, identifies stoning, beating, imprisonment and the death of the Apostle James by sword as some of the methods used to persecute the saints. Perhaps Paul was so filled with gratitude to God for them because he himself knew what it meant to suffer, and the faith and growth of the Thessalonians in the midst of persecution was clear evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. List the types of persecution and trials Paul endured.**

Paul's life was in constant jeopardy for the sake of the gospel. He gave glory to God and commended the Thessalonians because he saw in them the type of commitment to Christ he had prayed for.

The willingness of the Thessalonians to stand firm in their faith revealed that they fully understood what Christ meant when he told his disciples to *"count the cost"* of following Him (Luke 14:28 NKJV). They had grasped the concept *"... that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God,"* Acts 14:22 (NKJV).

They had accepted the truth of Christ's words, that *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you."* (John 15:18, NKJV). They had embraced words of Jesus, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."* (Matthew 16:24-25 NKJV). The depth of the true commitment the Thessalonians had to Jesus in following Him, obeying his commands, and standing firm in the faith was clearly amazing.

One of the most remarkable saints of the twentieth century, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, is best known for his statement, *"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."*<sup>2</sup> Not only are we called to die to ourselves and the desires of our flesh, but we should all be willing to take risks to bring the gospel to the world, to endure suffering and persecution, and to give our very lives for our Lord and Savior, Jesus. This sounds beyond daunting to most of us. But the reality is that Christ issued the "Great Commission" in Matthew 28 to all of us. Truly, it is only because of those who suffered and died for the sake of the gospel that we have the privilege of knowing Christ today.

**What do you think causes Christians to avoid taking risks to bring the gospel to areas where persecution occurs?**

**Are the reasons many of us fail to take risks valid? How can we overcome those things that might hold us back from obedience to the Lord?**

Consider the words of Elisabeth Elliott, a missionary and author whose husband was killed by savages in Ecuador while they served as missionaries there:

*"God's command 'Go ye, and preach the gospel to every creature' was the categorical imperative. The question of personal safety was wholly irrelevant."<sup>3</sup>*

Serving in complete obedience is not always easy, but in reality, there is an urgency on this earth right now that the gospel must be spread, that eternal destinies are at stake, and that our personal safety, comfort and security are not more important than saving souls!

**Look up Acts 1:8. Where did Jesus tell the disciples that they would be witnesses?**

The persecution of the early believers was not endured by them in vain. By being scattered, the believers were able to spread the gospel further and further! The Lord never wastes our suffering. He uses it to bring glory to His name.

Brother Yun, a follower of Christ who boldly spread the gospel in communist China and suffered greatly for it, confirmed how persecution results in growth through his statement, *"A glass that is shattered travels further than an intact one."*<sup>4</sup> Countless lives have been shattered by persecution to bring eternal life to the lost from the time of Christ to the present day.

The church of Thessalonica was a model church, filled with followers who endured persecution and remained steadfast. What an amazing example for each of us to follow!

The Lord  
never wastes  
our suffering.

He uses it to  
bring glory to  
His name.



Paul commended and encouraged the Thessalonians for their faith and growth. Take a moment and pray that the Lord will reveal to you someone you know who is enduring a heavy trial or serving the Lord faithfully despite difficulties. Pray for them and then ask God to give you words of encouragement to share with them either with a letter, a card, an email or a phone call.

If you would like to be touched in a special way, take about 3½ minutes to be blessed by Jadon Lavik's rendition of "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" - one of the most classic Christian hymns and learn the story behind the hymn.



Spotify: "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" by Jadon Lavik

YouTube: "Stories of Christian Persecution | I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (Ft. Jadon Lavik)"

Journal any emotions you experience as you hear the story:



## DIG DEEPER:

Go to <https://www.compellingtruth.org/apostles-die.html> and read about the fate of the disciples of Jesus. Why do you think they were willing to give their very lives for Christ?

**Prayer:** *Almighty Father, I ask that You speak to me through your Word and that You give me the strength and perseverance I would need to stand firm when persecution and suffering crosses my path. Help me to keep my eyes fixed on You, and use my trials to transform me into Your masterpiece.*

Every one of us has or will at some point in our lives, face trials, pain and suffering. We would all like to avoid heartache, pain, and sorrow, but suffering truly is one of the ways we can become most like Christ. Let's take a look at how we can walk through those dark times and remain victorious.

Today we will focus on 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

**Read this passage and write it at the end of your workbook.**

Paul continues his second letter to the Thessalonians by reminding them that the judgment of God is right, and they will be counted worthy of His kingdom through their suffering. The hardship the early church experienced was monumental, but God's Word reveals that persecution and suffering are an inevitable part of the Christian walk. In Philippians 1:29 (NIV), Paul explains, *"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him..."*

Peter also makes it very clear that suffering comes with following Christ:

*"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."* 1 Peter 2:21 (NIV.)

Imagine what it was like for the believers in Jerusalem after Stephen's death when a great persecution broke out. By this time, there were at least eight thousand believers (Acts 2:41; Acts 4:4). These believers knew that their lives were at stake. They left their homes, their jobs, their friends and even family members, to follow Christ. They sacrificed the things we value and place security in to escape persecution and remain true to their faith.<sup>1</sup>

**How do you think these believers were able to stand firm in the midst of persecution?**

I don't believe any of us would volunteer to undergo persecution, trials, or suffering if we had a choice. Yet if we never endured trials of any kind, would this be beneficial for our growth in Christ? The truth is that a life of comfort, ease, affluence, and security can cause us to fall into a state of inertia. Inertia occurs when something fails to change or grow. A problem-free life serves to deter us from recognizing our need for God and can push us into a place of spiritual inertia. The things that we think we need and look to for happiness in this life instead can bring us to a place of apathy, self-centeredness, and preoccupation with the things of the world.<sup>2</sup> We need to consider the words of A.W. Tozer: *"Complacency is the deadly foe of all spiritual growth."*<sup>3</sup>

There is a divine purpose in trials and suffering. Suffering brings us to our knees. It is in that place that the Lord meets us. It is there that we cannot be complacent. It is in that place of total dependence upon Him that we come to the end of trusting ourselves. It is through our brokenness and weakness that we come to total surrender of our own strength and complete reliance upon the strength, power and wisdom of Almighty God.

We always have a choice in how we deal with our afflictions. Unfortunately, the Enemy walks along the path of suffering. His goal is to deter us from standing firm, and he will throw his fiery darts of fear, doubt, and hopelessness our way to take our eyes off Jesus.

Proverbs 24:10 NIV states, *"If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength!"*

Instead of faltering in our faith and taking a path which only leads to hopelessness, we must fix our eyes on Jesus, our Refuge and Strength. We must nourish our souls with the Bread of Life by reading the promises of God and hiding those promises in our heart, as the Word of God will serve as spiritual medicine to our wounds. We must also pray for the power of the Holy Spirit which is available to us to give us strength.

When we ask God for strength, the Lord will not only give us His strength to endure, but He will also deal with our circumstances and our offenders. **Take a few moments to read Acts 16:19-40.**

We are told in this passage that Paul and Silas were beaten and arrested in Philippi. Instead of sitting in the jail cell worrying, fretting, and becoming paralyzed by fear, they did not falter in their faith. Their attitude was to be in submission to the Lordship of Christ, knowing that He is all powerful and in control. They prayed and sang hymns to the Lord!

### **What was the result of the extraordinary faith of Paul and Silas?**

The Lord uses us mightily when we pray to Him and praise Him in the midst of our pain. Jesus will give us a path to follow when we are enduring affliction. We must simply ask Him to walk beside us, holding our hand and giving us light when we walk through darkness. The only way the Thessalonians were able to endure the afflictions they had to face was through their total dependence upon

God. Think about it -- they did not have the New Testament which we have at our disposal to give us hope. They had just the teachings of Paul and Silas and Timothy and Paul's letters of encouragement. Their strength came from what they had learned, and from their prayers and the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the midst of every ounce of pain, and every negative feeling that torments our very soul -- sorrow, fear, anxiety, despair, hopelessness, discouragement and weakness, GOD is with us. He walks through the fire with us, holding our hand, never wasting our suffering, with His plan in place to produce in us an eternal weight of glory, and to bring us to that holiness He desires, without which we will not see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

God never wastes our pain. He will use every trial we endure to transform us when we keep our eyes on Him.

**According to Romans 5:3 NIV, what are three things that suffering produces?**

We must not falter or lose hope when we suffer, because *the end result of suffering is priceless.*

This quote by Timothy Keller sums it up:

*"Christ did not suffer so you wouldn't suffer. He suffered so when you suffer you will become like Him."*<sup>4</sup>

**In 1 Peter 4:13, what does Peter tell us we are to do when we are suffering?**

Jesus gave us a promise when he taught us about persecution:

*"Blessed are you when men persecute you for righteousness' sake, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets before you,"* (Matthew 5:11-12 KJV).

We may not be persecuted for righteousness' sake, but many of us have experienced trials as a result of offenses to us such as rejection or abuse. Our initial reaction when we have been attacked or hurt by others is to want the offender to be held accountable, especially if we have been hurt deeply, but how we respond to offenses to us by others is critical.

## **Read Romans 12:19. What are we told to leave room for?**

In 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10, Paul reminded them that there will be justice. We must remember this when we are enduring trials for the sake of the Lord, and that we will be rewarded and made worthy of His calling. There will be a blessing when we remain steadfast and firm:

*"Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."* James 1:12 (NIV.)

Our lives here, our afflictions, our pain and suffering, and our tears are all momentary. The Lord is our Deliverer, and not only will He always be with us during our times of sorrow, but what awaits us after we have fought the good fight is beyond comprehension. We will one day be filled with a joy that cannot be contained. We will conclude with this:

*"The most rapturous delights you have ever had — in the beauty of a landscape, or in the pleasure of food, or in the fulfillment of a loving embrace — are like dewdrops compared to the bottomless ocean of joy that it will be to see God face-to-face (1 John 3:1-3). That is what we are in for, nothing less. . ."*<sup>5</sup>

-- Timothy Keller.



We have all likely heard the words to Lauren Daigle's song "Trust." But read the lyrics and let them soak in. After you have meditated on the words, record whatever the Lord speaks to you from these beautiful words.

*Letting go of every single dream  
I lay each one down at Your feet  
Every moment of my wandering  
Never changes what You see  
I try to win this war  
I confess, my hands are weary, I need Your rest  
Mighty warrior, king of the fight  
No matter what I face You're by my side*

*When You don't move the mountains  
I'm needing You to move  
When You don't part the waters  
I wish I could walk through  
When You don't give the answers  
As I cry out to You  
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You*

*Truth is, You know what tomorrow brings  
There's not a day ahead You have not seen  
So let all things be my life and breath  
I want what You want Lord and nothing less*

*When You don't move the mountains  
I'm needing You to move  
When You don't part the waters  
I wish I could walk through  
When You don't give the answers  
As I cry out to You  
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You*





The Lord has a solution for every single emotion we experience during affliction. His Word is spiritual medicine to our souls when we are suffering. Our Lord has given us so many precious promises to strengthen us. Look up the following verses and make it a personal goal to memorize the verses that strengthen you and hide them in your heart so that you will not falter or lose hope during times of suffering.

**Where is the Lord when we are brokenhearted and crushed in spirit according to Psalm 34:18?**

**What does the Lord teach us about hopelessness in Isaiah 40:31?**

**Look up Isaiah 41:13. What does the Lord promise us when we have fear?**

**What is the purpose of despair found in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10?**

**Look up Philippians 4:6-7. What does the Lord teach us to do with our worry and anxiety?**

*To this end we always pray for you that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Thessalonians 1: 11-12 ESV

**Prayer:** *Lord, I come today asking that You might make me worthy of Your calling. When I go through times of suffering, may I, like the early disciples, rejoice that I am counted worthy to suffer shame for Your name. (Acts 5:41) May Your name be glorified. I exalt You, O Lord.*



"Dmitri's Song (Jesus is Alive)" by Todd Smith is an excellent song to listen to begin today's study, and it can easily be found on YouTube.

There is a powerful story behind the song. Dmitri was a Russian factory worker who was imprisoned when the house church he pastored began to grow. He was sent to a prison full of hardened criminals 1,000 miles away from his home. Every morning he would rise and sing songs of praise to God. The other prisoners would curse him and throw food and human waste at him. He was told he could be released if he would sign a paper recanting his faith in Jesus. For 17 years he would not sign. Because he refused, he was to be executed. As he was dragged out of his cell to his execution, the other prisoners stood, raised their hands and sang "O God Give Me Strength." The fear of the Lord came upon the guards, and they became terrified. They asked Dmitri, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am a son of the living God and His name is Jesus." He was released shortly afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

Dmitri lived a life worthy of God's calling.

It is clear that the Thessalonians were being afflicted and suffering for their faith in Jesus, yet they remained steadfast. First century Christians often faced rejection from family and friends, slander, reproach, mockery, scorn, boycotting by customers, loss of homes and possessions, wrongful lawsuits, imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom. What does it look like for God to make someone worthy of His calling? The worthiness that happens during suffering is an act of God, not man. It is God who makes the believer worthy.

It was Paul's desire that God would meet the Thessalonians in their time of distress so that the glory to come would match their suffering. Please note: Paul did not pray that the Thessalonians would be removed from the trials they were experiencing. Instead he prayed that God would make them worthy of their calling. The main focus of Paul's prayer is on God's glory. God was glorified as they patiently endured suffering and by faith pursued what was good. Paul prayed that in their afflictions they might truly manifest the glory of God by their faithfulness and testimony.

**Read Philippians 1:27-30. Describe the manner of life a believer should pursue in order to be worthy of the gospel of Christ.**

It is Paul's desire that the Philippians stand firm in times of suffering. To the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote, "*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*" (Ephesians 4:1 NIV). When Paul mentioned his imprisonment for the Lord, he was challenging the believers to walk worthy of their calling by being willing to suffer for Christ. Jesus teaches that being willing to suffer is necessary for discipleship.

**What makes us worthy according to Matthew 10:34-38?**

When Christ says to take up the cross, he is referring to any type of suffering that comes while walking with Him, including death.<sup>2</sup>

**Look up the following verses and summarize what they say about persecution:**

**John 15: 18-20**

**2 Timothy 3:12**

Faithfulness to Jesus leads to persecution from the world.

**In what ways have you experienced persecution for your faith?**

God wants His people to persevere and endure no matter what happens. James 1:2-4 (NASB) states: *"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."*

**Read about what life was like for followers of God in Hebrews 11:32-39. In your own words describe the cost of their faithfulness.**

Despite their suffering, the believers are commended by God for their unwavering faith. Whatever glorifies God is good for us. That includes persecution. God refines us in our suffering and graciously explains why. *"See I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. . ."* (Isaiah 48:10-11 NIV). For emphasis, God repeats this reason (for my own sake).

The universe is about God and His glory. Whatever exalts God's glory works for our ultimate good because when we have gone through a time of darkness and great suffering and have kept our faith, we realize it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit and not through our own strength that we have been able to endure.

1 Peter 4:16 (ESV) says, *"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name."* When you suffer because you are a Christian, God is glorified. Why? We can get a hint from Job. Job's friends insisted he had done evil and deserved to suffer. But Job suffered because God had determined it and Satan was bent on it. As Job refused to curse God, God was glorified.

During times of persecution, Christians have been able to withstand great loss, imprisonment, torture and death, and it is only through the strength and power of God Almighty, not their own, that they have done so. This strength, displayed powerfully in their lives, brings glory to God. God and God alone is the source of their endurance through suffering.

A Christian Pastor in Syria who has experienced persecution of the worst kind, stated:

*"If there is no earthly thing to trust in, you have to trust in God. . ."*<sup>13</sup>

When persecuted Christians suffer and are able to tell others about Christ and sing His praises, this brings glory to God. The ultimate goal of enduring tribulation as the Thessalonians did is that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in them. As they lived their lives filled with affliction,

they lived them in such a way as to bring honor and glory to the Savior.

What does it mean to bring glory to God? Psalm 19:1 (ESV) states: *"The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims His handiwork."* The heavens declare that God is perfect. They manifest His wisdom, power, and purpose. They reveal who God is and what He can do.

As Christians we are designed to show *"the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ."* (Ephesians 2:7 NKJV). Regardless of our circumstances or afflictions, may we live lives that are faithful, lives that bring honor and glory to His name.

## Journal Prompt



Reflect on why it is possible that God has purposes that are tied to the suffering of His people.



## **DIG DEEPER:**

Take some time to look up verses that refer to giving glory to God. Start with following, and list others you find as you search the Scriptures.

**Psalms 72:18-20**

**Matthew 5:16**

**John 15:8**

**I Corinthians 6:20**

**I Corinthians 10:31**

**Ephesians 1:11-13**

**Revelation 11:13**

**Revelation 14:7**

The worthiness  
that happens  
during  
suffering is  
an act of God,  
not man.

It is God who  
makes the  
believer  
worthy.

**Prayer:** *Father, let today be a day of awakening for those who are unaware of the plight of our brothers and sisters enduring extreme suffering for your sake in other parts of the world. Help us to not just be "bothered" by the truth that follows. Help us to be broken over it. Pierce our hearts so that we are doers of the word and not just hearers when it comes to helping our brothers and sisters worldwide who are enduring loss, pain, torture and even death for the sake of the gospel.*

Today you will learn some very heavy truths. We have summarized a few stories that the media doesn't talk about. Yet our brothers and sisters across the globe are hurting, and Christians need to know. So prepare your hearts to receive the following, taken from *Heirloom Love*, by Dominic Sputo, and then ask the Lord to guide you in what to do with what you learn.

.....

Close your eyes for a few moments and imagine the vast, barren Sahara Desert. Now envision a large metal shipping container in the middle of that desert, sealed shut and absorbing the searing 100 degree heat day after day. Next, picture 18 to 20 emaciated men or women crammed into this container for months and years, baking in the heat, fighting for air to breath from one small hole, smelling the stench of one toilet bucket in the corner, and having to take turns to sleep due to lack of room in the container. Finally, picture dozens of these containers lined up in a row in the desert. This is Mai Serwa prison camp outside Asmara, Eritrea.

Evangelical Christianity was outlawed in Eritrea in 2002, and this small country is now known as the "North Korea of Africa" as a result of its inhumane treatment of its own citizens. Approximately 50% of the Christians in Eritrea have been arrested at some time in their lives. Helen Berhane, a beautiful sweet lover of Jesus who lived in Eritrea, was arrested one night in a raid at a secret church meeting. Her fate was imprisonment at Mai Serwa.

The guards at Mai Serwa regularly punished the inmates for making noise or looking out of the breathing hole with beatings, exposure to extreme heat and cold, and other forms of torture. Christian prisoners received the worst treatment in the camp, and every time new prisoners arrived, the Christian prisoners were brought out and tortured as an example.

Helen loved the Lord, and her imprisonment did not stop her from sharing that love with her inmates and the guards, nor did the offer of freedom in exchange for recanting her faith cause her to waiver. Despite repeated beatings and other forms of torture, Helen smuggled scriptures to other inmates, taught the Bible, prayed with her inmates and sang praises to the Lord. Her torturers often shook their heads in bewilderment. A few of guards came to the Lord, as did many others imprisoned.

One day, however, a Muslim named Suleiman grew tired of Helen's singing and love for the Lord. He called Helen before him and, with a police baton, systematically beat Helen over every inch of her body. He beat her so hard that he had to stop and rest, but then he resumed his beating, while Helen raised her eyes to Jesus and silently endured the torture, knowing she was dying. When he was finished, he dragged her back and chained her up under the blistering hot sun. She was then placed back in her container where she layed for days, losing blood, unable to stand, unable to urinate, barely able to breath as a result of swelling in her neck. After two weeks, Suleiman finally allowed Helen to be released to a hospital.

From there, Helen was able to escape, miraculously, to Sudan, and eventually to freedom in Denmark. To this day Helen continues her ministry wherever the Lord leads her. She has never stopped singing. Helen has told the details of her 31 month imprisonment in a book, *Song of the Nightingale*. Helen's story is just one of many.<sup>1</sup>

.....

The following story is very graphic, as it depicts what it is like in the most dangerous country in the world to be a Christian, North Korea. I hope it inspires you to pray for the Christians in North Korea.

Shin Dong-hyuk was born in 1982 in a prison camp in North Korea. Judged guilty and given a life sentence even before his conception, Shin was paying for his parents' sins of being Christian. For over 20 years, Shin never saw life outside of the prison camp. He thought it was normal to live on the verge of starvation, to labor beyond the point of exhaustion, to live in inhumane conditions with lice infested hair, and to witness countless deaths from starvation, disease, and torture. He assumed from the time he was a toddler that avoiding death meant feeding on rats and being an informant to the prison guards to earn rewards.

When Shin was 13, he turned his mother and brother in for discussing an escape attempt. A guard took the credit for this, and Shin was thereafter tortured to extract information from him. Shin was broiled over flames, left hanging upside down, and his torturers pierced is groin with a steel hook to keep him from struggling. He was eventually forced to witness his mother and brother's executions by hanging and by firing squad, respectively. He knew that he brought this about himself.

At the age of 23, Shin escaped to South Korea and the West. When Shin tells his story, he speaks with emotional numbness. His exposure to the most horrifically inhumane treatment has conditioned him to shut down, as his ability to respond with normal emotions may be impaired for life as a result of his trauma.<sup>2</sup>

The media doesn't tell us that Kim Jong-un, the current dictator of North Korea, is systematically eradicating Christians. Under his regime, Christianity is treason, and thousands of Christians have been sentenced to life imprisonment in labor camps.

The media also fails to report the fact that Omar al-Bashir, dictator of Sudan, has wiped out over two million Christians from the face of the earth over the last 27 years. In fact, al-Bashir is nothing short of the likes of Hitler, as his plan is to exterminate all non-Arab people remaining in Sudan. Under his command, every Sudanese citizen must become Muslim by faith and Arab by culture, or face death. The goal of his genocide is to create a “pure” Muslim nation, and as a result, the Christians remaining in Sudan have been forced to migrate into the wilderness, living in mountain caves, barely surviving on leaves and whatever they can find on the land.<sup>3</sup>

Christians today are being persecuted all over the globe, in Nigeria, China, Burma, Pakistan, Syria, India, and countless other countries, enduring imprisonment, loss of their homes, physical torture, beheadings, rape and death as a result of their faith, while each day, we are blessed with the freedom to love and worship God.

Open Doors, one of the largest non-profit organizations in the world dedicated to helping the persecuted church of today, has conducted in depth research regarding current global persecution, which has concluded the following:

- 215 million Christians experience high levels of persecution in the countries on the World Watch List. This represents 1 in 12 Christians worldwide.
- North Korea was ranked number one for the 17th consecutive year as the most dangerous country for Christians.
- During the World Watch List 2018 reporting period, 3,066 Christians were killed; 1,252 were abducted; 1,020 were raped or sexually harassed; and 793 churches were attacked.
- Islamic Oppression fuels Christian persecution in 8 of the top 10 countries.<sup>4</sup>

Our Lord Jesus has commanded us to love the Lord our God above all else, and to love one another. This includes loving our brothers and sisters throughout the world who are suffering. We should also recognize that those who are persecuting Christians are essentially persecuting Jesus. In Acts 9:5, when Paul was stopped on the road to Damascus with a light and a loud voice, it was Jesus who responded to Paul's question of who he was with, *“I am Jesus whom you persecute.”*

Dominic Spoto, author of *Heirloom Love*, said, *“When people persecute Christians, they’re really persecuting who? Jesus. In the same way, when we care for the persecuted, we’re really caring for Jesus. And that’s why Jesus said, ‘Whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’”*<sup>5</sup>

**Read Matthew 25:31-46 where Jesus describes the last judgment of God.**

**How does he describe those who will inherit the kingdom he has prepared? Who does Jesus say their works were done unto?**

Dominic Sputo recalled he was once considering and praying about how much money to donate to starving Christians in Nigeria. He remembered, *"And the Lord whispered something into my heart that I don't believe I'll ever forget. He said, 'That's me. I'm hungry. And I'm waiting and watching to see who loves me and will give me something to eat.'"*<sup>6</sup>

Take some time to process what you have learned today and to pray for our brothers and sisters suffering persecution throughout the world.



Google "Secret Children - The Hidden Victims of the Persecuted Church" and you will find a link to a video about the type of persecution children are currently suffering in other parts of the world. Take time to watch this brief video by Open Doors.

The cold hard facts of what is going on in the world is heart-wrenching. Now remember what Christ said to Paul on the road to Damascus, that it was He (Christ) that Paul was persecuting.

Record all of the emotions you have experienced from what you have learned in today's lesson and from the video. Write out a prayer for the persecuted church remembering that, when we touch the sick, the needy, the oppressed, the broken, the wounded, and the persecuted, we touch the suffering body of Christ.

**Prayer:** *Lord I understand that many of my fellow Christians are suffering for their faith. They are willing to follow Jesus even if it means losing their loved ones, their livelihoods and even their lives. Give me a heart of love and compassion. Reveal to me how I can show love and help these believers in their time of great need.*



A worship song suggestion for today's study is "Find Us Faithful" by Steve Green.

**Please read John 13:34-35 and ask God to speak to your heart.**

Our care for suffering Christians is not optional. The Body of Christ is a New Testament metaphor for the Church. Everyone who has a personal relationship with Jesus is a part of this a part of the body of Christ. 1 John 4:11 (ESV) says: *"Beloved if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."* According to 1 Corinthians 12:26a (ESV) : *"If one member (of the Body) suffers, all suffer together. . ."*

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:8 to have fervent love for one another above all things. Jesus in Matthew 25:34-40 (NASB) tells us that whatever we do for *"the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me."*

**According to 1 John 3:16-18, what are we called to do?**

**What do you think this means in terms of our persecuted brothers and sisters?**

**What is our obligation before God?**

Richard Wurmbbrand, in his book *Tortured for Christ* writes:

“The message I bring from the Underground Church is:

- Don't abandon us!
- Don't forget us!
- Don't write us off!
- Give us the tools we need. We will pay the price for using them!”<sup>1</sup>

Dominic Spoto suggests in his book *Heirloom Love* a four-part action plan based on the example of Nehemiah.

1. Nehemiah showed concern for the events affecting his people living in Jerusalem.  
(Nehemiah 1:2)
2. When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates were burned, he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed. (Nehemiah 1:4-11)
3. Then Nehemiah advocated on behalf of his fellow Jews who were oppressed. (Nehemiah 2:3-8)
4. He ministered practically to his people's needs by donating from his own wealth.  
(Nehemiah 5:14-19)<sup>2</sup>

Similarly we can show our love to our persecuted brethren through one or more of these responses:

#### **AWARENESS:**

Our love for these brothers and sisters begins with seeking to know about their circumstances. We cannot depend on the news to provide us with accurate information on Christian persecution. There are several Christian organizations that are providing reliable information about what is happening throughout the world. Some of these include Open Doors, Voice of the Martyrs, and International Christian Response (ICR).

We need to know about the specific circumstances of those being persecuted before we can effectively respond in the other three categories.

**Challenge:** Seek awareness of current events in one of the countries where Christians face intense persecution. What steps will you take to learn and stay informed about your brothers and sisters in that country who are suffering right now because they follow Jesus?<sup>3</sup>

*PRAYER:*

Here are some suggested ways to pray for those who are being persecuted; **look up the scriptures listed and fill in the missing words:**

1. John 17:15 (NASB) Pray that God would “keep them from the \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. 2 Thessalonians 3:1 (NASB) “Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread \_\_\_\_\_ and be \_\_\_\_\_, just as it did also with you.”
3. Hebrews 10:36 and Hebrews 12:3 (NASB): Pray, too, that the Lord will comfort them and them and grant them endurance as they suffer.
4. 2 Peter 3:9 (NASB): Pray that those who oppose them might come to salvation. “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to \_\_\_\_\_ but for \_\_\_\_\_ to come to repentance.”

Recently the informed prayers of Christians around the world made a difference in the life of a twenty-seven year old Sudanese woman named Meriam Ibrahim. Her mother raised her as a Christian and she later married Daniel Wani, a Christian and a U.S. citizen who suffers from muscular dystrophy and is confined to a wheelchair. They had a son, and in 2014, when her son was two and she was 8 months pregnant with their second child, she was arrested and convicted of adultery. The laws of Sudan would not recognize her marriage to a Christian. Her adulterous marriage earned her a sentence of 100 lashes. She was also convicted of apostasy for abandoning the faith of her Muslim father who abandoned her when she was young. That “crime” earned her a sentence of death by hanging. She went to prison. The floggings were postponed until after she gave birth and the hanging postponed until she weaned her baby. She was given the opportunity to abandon Jesus and return to Islam. She would be free. Christians began to pray. She remained steadfast in her commitment to Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

**Picture a member of your family who loves Jesus at the hand of some oppressor.**

**Would you stop praying?**

**What else would you do on their behalf?**

**What does Hebrews 13:3 tell us to do?**

*ADVOCACY:*

**Look up and write the following verses:**

**Proverbs 24:11-12**

**Proverbs 31:8-9**

Back to the story of Meriam. While she was awaiting her lashes and execution, news of her story went viral. Thousands of emails, phone calls, and petitions barraged politicians to pressure the Sudanese government to release Meriam and her children from prison. Dominic Spoto, author of *Heirloom Love*, organized a demonstration in Washington D.C. He even carried a sign offering to take her lashes. Christians in other countries were also demonstrating. Several world governments pressured Sudan to release Meriam. *Advocacy worked.* Today Meriam, her husband, and children love and worship freely in the U.S.<sup>5</sup>

Today thousands of young Christian girls in places like Egypt and Pakistan are being kidnapped, raped, and forced to marry Muslim men. Countless other Christians are being imprisoned, beaten, and tortured for their faith. We can make a difference.

**Challenge: What is one way you can use your influence to speak for your suffering brothers and sisters in Christ?**

## GIVING:

According to research conducted by Dominic Sposito, less than ½ of 1% of American church collections are used to help the persecuted church.<sup>6</sup>

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 Paul points out that the extremely poor Macedonians gave "*beyond their ability*." (NASB).

**What do you imagine they had to give up to help other Christians?**

**What motivated them to "beg" to help suffering Christians in a foreign land?**

In 2 Corinthians 8:7 Paul encourages the believers to excel in the grace of giving. Their giving was to be motivated by Jesus' love and grace.

**How can wealth and possessions affect our heart toward the Lord and His kingdom? See Matthew 6:19-34 and Luke 8:14-15).**

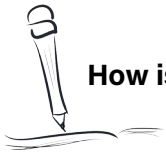
**Read 2 Corinthians 8:13-15. Describe God's economy.**

His will for the abundance He gives some of us is that we would share that abundance with others in need.

Dominic Sposito comments: "*Finally, the proof of our genuine love will be visible (or not) in our check-books and bank statements. Millions of persecuted believers around the world need assistance from us, their brothers and sisters, who have been entrusted with liberty and abundance. Many of us in the US have the 'goods of this world'*" (1 John 3:17, NASB). *We are therefore responsible to 'share with God's people who are in need' by providing for their physical needs* (Romans 12:13 and James 2:16)."<sup>7</sup> Even a few dollars can mean life for families who have lost everything.

**Challenge: Where do you spend money that you could save and give to help those who are suffering for the name of Jesus Christ?**

May the Lord help all of us to become more aware of the needs of our brothers and sisters who are suffering in this world, to pray for them consistently, to advocate for them in any way we can, and to be filled with the love of Jesus so much so that we truly excel in the grace of giving to them in their time of need.



**How is the Lord leading you to help your persecuted brothers and sisters?**

Consider just a small step to start. Consider choosing a partner to encourage you and hold you accountable.



## **DIG DEEPER:**

**Read and paraphrase the following passages about Jesus' teaching on Kingdom living and giving:**

**Matthew 25:31-46**

**Luke 12:13-34**

**Luke 16:1-13**

Those who are  
persecuting  
Christians are  
essentially  
persecuting  
Jesus.

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WEEK

# Two

by Lori Moe



# introduction

## The Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-16

*"Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him... Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?" 1 Thessalonians 2:1, 5\**

When I first read this passage, I wondered at Paul's statement that he had already explained Jesus' Second Coming to the new church. How did he even know about it when the New Testament, including the gospels had yet to be written, especially the book of The Revelation to John? He had certainly heard about what Jesus had said about the future and knew what the Old Testament prophecies were about judgment and the Messiah, but I am still amazed at the detail he taught the Thessalonians and some of the other churches about Jesus' return. We have those old prophecies, all of Jesus' words and the the letters written by Paul, Peter, James and John that speak of it, and the book of Revelation that's all about it - and we barely understand what's going to happen much less how, when, and where!

This week we will explore some of what the "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" is all about, and what it means for us.

- Day 1      The Day of the Lord
- Day 2      The Man of Lawlessness
- Day 3      The Spirit of Lawlessness 1
- Day 4      The Spirit of Lawlessness 2
- Day 3      The Children of the Day

By doing these lessons you will either review what you already know about end times and/or gain an overall grasp on what is to come and what to do in the meantime. Pay attention to what you are learning about God - the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and praise Him for what He has done and what He will do!

If you have limited time and will not be able to complete every lesson, may I urge you to prioritize day 4? This, I believe, is where the application of important principles for our lives are revealed and discussed.

\*All scripture is from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

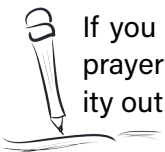
*"Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, ESV)*

It was 1973, and the Jesus Movement was in full motion. Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa had exploded to the point where it could not possibly contain all of the young, long haired, bell bottomed, barefooted hippies and surfers who now loved Jesus. A large circus tent was erected that held 2,000 people and it continued to be packed. Pastor Chuck Smith was teaching on "End Times" a lot back then and "the rapture", "the tribulation", "the beast", and other end times themes were the topic of many an excited conversation among the youthful converts. Early one Sunday morning in autumn, a carload (including my future husband) of enthusiastic young Christians from nearby UCI arrived at the tent, ready to rock out to the new Christian worship and learn more Bible truths. But the parking lot was empty. No one was there. They looked at each other incredulously. Where was everyone? Then their eyes widened and their jaws dropped! Had they missed the Rapture of the church?!?! Were they going to have to go through the Tribulation and witness the rise of the Antichrist?

A similar fear was alarming the young, enthusiastic Christians in Thessalonica. Had the Day of the Lord already come? No, in both instances. The UCI knuckleheads had forgotten that daylight savings time was over and all but they had turned their clocks back for that extra hour of sleep. The Thessalonians, who were suffering persecution and receiving false information, just needed Paul's reminder that certain things had to happen before the Lord Jesus will return.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, You are in control of everything, including the future events of Your Son's return. I pray that my mind would be calmed and my heart open to learn from Your Word today. Give me ears to hear and eyes to see all that is coming. I praise You, because You are good in all things.*

Let's go to our passage for this week and sort all of this out!



If you are participating in the exercise of writing out each passage of Scripture, thoughtfully and prayerfully write 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, using the version of your choice. You may spread this activity out over the course of the week.

**Read the passage 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 in the ESV.**

**In verses 1 and 8, the “coming” is mentioned. Who is coming?**

**In verses 2 and 3, the “day” is spoken of. Whose day?**

Paul is instructing on the “day of the Lord” which refers to the time of judgment and tribulation to come, and the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” which occurs after this time.

In the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, verse 2 says:

“...not to allow your minds to be quickly unsettled or disturbed or kept excited or alarmed, whether it be by some [pretended] revelation of [the] Spirit or by word or by letter [alleged to be] from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has [already] arrived and is here.”

Someone or something was messing with the believers, and they thought they had missed the rapture of the church and were now living in the day of the Lord! Were they left behind?

What does it all mean? Eschatology is the study of biblical “end times” or “last days” prophecy. Throughout history, scholars have done their best to understand when the end of the world as we know it will come, and how. Christians study the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, to piece together the coming scenario. There are differing interpretations, theories and opinions, but the Bible is clear that certain things will happen in the last days, and we are to be aware so as to not be deceived. Jesus is coming back!

**Read John 14:1-3. Write out verse 3.**

Despite Jesus’ assurance, like the Thessalonians, we may be confused or even anxious about Jesus’ return. Rumors, doomsday prophecies, sensational movies and books fuel the anticipation.

Following is a possible timeline of what is going to happen when it comes to end times. It is based on a pretribulational approach to eschatology (the church will be raptured or removed from the earth prior to the great tribulation). This is the approach that The Shoreline Church is committed to, seeing “the pretrib’ position as the most natural outcome of our historical-grammatical method for Bible interpretation,” according to our pastor. He also says, “Timetables are of secondary importance and if someone sees it differently and feels they have a biblical reason for that, we would not see that as a break in our fellowship.” This example of a timeline is presented in the hopes it will be beneficial to the understanding of our passage.

## Order of End-Time Events as Revealed in the Bible<sup>1</sup>

1. The Rapture of the Church. This is when Jesus comes and “snatches away” all believers, dead or alive, from the earth before a period of judgment on the earth (the tribulation).

**What do these scriptures say about the rapture:**

- **1 Corinthians 15:51-52**
  
- **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**

2. The Tribulation. A period of seven years in which God’s judgment is enacted on sinful humanity. It is described in detail in Revelation 6-16. Elsewhere in scripture it is also called *the Day of the Lord* (verses 2 and 3 of our passage).

**Write what these scriptures say about the tribulation:**

- **Daniel 9:24-27**
  
- **Zephaniah 1:15**
  
- **Matthew 24:21**

Events 3, 4, & 5 take place during the Tribulation.

3. The Rise of the Antichrist. This is the man of lawlessness from our passage. During the tribulation, by the “*activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders*” (2 Thessalonians 2:9) he will gain worldwide control with promises of peace but will be the very embodiment of evil.

4. The Battle of Gog and Magog. (Ezekiel 38-39)

5. The Abomination of Desolation. Midway through the tribulation the man of lawlessness "*who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship... takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.*" (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

Events 6, 7, 8 are part of Jesus' Second Coming.

6. The Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21)

7. The Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25:31-46)

8. The Binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3)

**Write what these scriptures say about Satan's defeat:**

- **Revelation 20:2-3**

- **2 Thessalonians 2:8**

9. The Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20; Isaiah 60-62)

10. The Last Battle (Revelation 20:7-10)

11. The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)

12. The New Creation (Revelation 21-22)

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 again, fill in the blanks.

v. 1 "Now concerning the \_\_\_\_\_ of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ to him..."

Compare this to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

"For the Lord himself will \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."

Jesus comes without warning and gathers the believers together to himself - the rapture. We believe this happens first.

v. 2 "... not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, ... that the \_\_\_\_\_ of the  
\_\_\_\_\_ has come."

Compare to 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

"Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are full aware that the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_  
will come like a thief in the night."

After the rapture, the day of Lord begins - the tribulation. Ironically, Paul did need to write the Thessalonians a second letter about the times and seasons, didn't he? They were not afraid that the day of the Lord was coming, but that they were in it!

v. 3 "Let no one deceive you in any way. For that \_\_\_\_\_ will not come, unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction."

Paul goes on to give more details, proving that the day of the Lord has not yet come. We will study them in following lessons.

What did you learn about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ today?

When you think about end times, what are your thoughts and feelings? Are you excited, anxious, or ambivalent? Does studying end times change your mindset or behavior in any way? What do you think God wants us to do with this information?

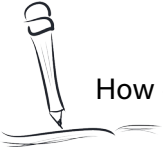


**DIG DEEPER:** Jesus taught many of these things, especially in what is called the Olivet Discourse.

*"As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'" (Matthew 24:3, ESV)*

Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are parallel chapters, covering Jesus' answer. Choose one of the chapters and read it. What are some of the instructions and encouragements Jesus gives the disciples about how to navigate all that is going to come? Write them down.

The coming of our Lord Jesus is written about many times in the New Testament. Jesus, Paul, James, Peter and John all speak of His coming, whether it's to gather us for the rapture, or to return in glory and victory. The early church lived in expectation of Jesus' imminent return, as has each generation since. Believers are always longing and ready for His coming. Back in the day at Calvary Chapel, "Maranatha!" bumper stickers were on every car in the parking lot. Maranatha is an Aramaic word that means "the Lord is coming" or "come, O Lord." It was used by early Christians to encourage one another as they suffered various persecutions.



How does Maranatha! encourage you today?



Worship Song: *Even So Come* by Chris Tomlin; Passion

*"Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction."*

2 Thessalonians 2:3 ESV

Roman emperor Nero reigned from 54 to 68 AD. During his reign, the Christian church was growing rapidly and Paul and other missionaries devoted to the gospel of Jesus Christ taught throughout much of the Roman empire. After a fire that burned nearly two-thirds of Rome, Nero blamed the Christians. He had them thrown to the dogs, nailed to crosses in his gardens, and burned alive to serve as living torches in the night. It is during his reign Peter and Paul were thought to have been executed. Christians saw him as a persecutor of their faith, and some came to believe that he was the antichrist, or would return as him - the man of lawlessness. How could you blame them?

Historically, many men or institutions of men have been accused of being the Antichrist from Bible prophecy. To name a few there has been other ancient rulers, various popes, Napoleon, Hitler, Mikhail Gorbachev, Henry Kissinger, along with several US presidents. Certainly, those who perpetrate rebellion, lawlessness and destruction have been present in the world since the days of Noah!

**Prayer:** *Dear Father in heaven, today I'm going to learn about a man who opposes everything that you are! You are love, mercy, righteousness, grace, and so much more. You will never change and I put my trust in You. By Your Holy Spirit, guide me to Your truth as I study Your Word.*

**Read all of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 in a different version.**

**Fill in the blanks:**

***"Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the \_\_\_\_\_ comes first, ..."***

The word that fills in this blank is from the Greek *apostasia*. Some versions translate it as the apostasy. It means to forsake, or a falling away. Bible scholars say that the rebellion/apostasy/falling away will be a rebellion against God by unbelievers or the abandonment of faith by professed believers.

**v. 3 *"... and the man of \_\_\_\_\_ is revealed, the son of \_\_\_\_\_."***

**Without studying further, how would you describe the word lawlessness, or man of lawlessness?**

Man of lawlessness is also translated as man of sin or evil, or as the Wicked One. Son of destruction can also be son of perdition or doom, or the one doomed to be destroyed.

The word lawlessness is from the Greek *anomia* and means contempt and violation of law, iniquity, wickedness.

Where does this man of lawlessness come from and what will he do?

**v. 4** "...who \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he \_\_\_\_\_ his seat in the temple of God, \_\_\_\_\_ himself to be God."

**v. 9** "The coming of the lawless one is by the \_\_\_\_\_ with all \_\_\_\_\_ and false \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,"

**v. 10** "and with all wicked \_\_\_\_\_ for those who are perishing..."

According to verse 9, by what does he come?

According to verses 4, 9 and 10, what are some of the things he will do?

Where else in the Bible is there information about this person?

Read the following scriptures and write what he is called and/or what he will do:

- Daniel 7:24-25

- Daniel 9:26

- 1 John 2:18

- Revelation 13:1-8

He is a boastful and cruel king.

He is a prince who establishes a covenant of 7 years with Israel then breaks it.

He is the antichrist.

He is the beast.

He is the man of lawlessness, the Wicked (KJV) who will proclaim himself to be God, powerfully perform false signs and wonders, and wickedly deceive.

If you recall from Day One, he comes to power during the tribulation. But then, Jesus comes back ...

**v.8 "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will \_\_\_\_\_ with the breath of his mouth and \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ by the appearance of his coming."**

The Antichrist is the embodiment of everything that is the very opposite of our Lord Jesus Christ, but when true King Jesus returns he is defeated. Praise God! Christian believers need not fear him anyway because we believe we will be in heaven with Jesus while he comes to power. What then do we do until that time?

**Read 1 John 2:18-27** (I suggest reading it in the New Living Translation.)

**In verses 20 and 27, it says we have been given/received the Holy Spirit. What do we know by the Holy Spirit? What does He teach us?**

**In verses 24-27, what does John say we should do?**

As 2 Thessalonians 2:3 says, *"Let no one deceive you in any way."* We have the truth and we will remain in fellowship with Christ until he returns.

**How will you have fellowship with Christ as you await the appearance of his coming?**

**Do you see men/women of lawlessness in the world right now? Could any of them be the "real" Antichrist?**



**DIG DEEPER:** Do you have more questions about end times? Go to [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org) and search "Questions about the End Times".



If the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist, is everything that is against Christ, what does that mean? To really understand, you have to consider everything that IS Christ. Make a list of all the things that you know Christ is, then write the opposite or anti words that match the original list. Write a prayer to God, asking him to make you Christlike.



*"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work."*

2 Thessalonians 2:7 (ESV)

*"And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already." 1 John 4:3 (ESV)*

## HE>i

Who has seen this logo on the back of a t-shirt or car? Who else besides me thought it was pronounced "hecky" and had no idea what it means? HE > i. He is greater than I. Oh, now I see. Yes! More of God, less of me. The logo is for a lifestyle company / clothing brand that is based off the Bible verse John 3:30 - *"HE (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease."* How cool is that? I am encouraged and inspired every time I see it. But, just the other day, I saw a different sticker on a car. he=i. God equals I. That just grieves my heart. Is this not an example of man setting himself against any form of worship and claiming to be God? After the initial dismay, I prayed for the driver of that car. She is a victim of the lawlessness / evil already in the world and needs rescue!

**Prayer:** *O Father, I am well aware that we live in a world where lawlessness abounds, but Your righteousness abounds more powerfully than anything that could come against me. Thank you that Your Spirit restrains evil in this world and yet lives in me to encourage and guide me. Guide me in my study today.*

**Read our focus passage, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, again and fill in the blanks.**

**v. 6** *"And you know what is \_\_\_\_\_ him now so that he may be \_\_\_\_\_ in his time."*

**v. 7** *"For the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ is already at work. Only he who now \_\_\_\_\_ it will do so until he is out of the way."*

**v. 8** *"And then the \_\_\_\_\_ one will be \_\_\_\_\_..."*

Paul already told the Thessalonians (*you know...*) what is restraining the lawless one but unfortunately does not repeat that information for our enlightenment. Bible scholars have come up with no less than eight likely possibilities, but all of them can be summed up to say that the Holy Spirit is curbing the evil in the world. Then and now, the Holy Spirit works through the New Testament church.

*"The Holy Spirit of God is the only Person with sufficient (supernatural) power to do this restraining and the Spirit works through believers to accomplish this. The church, indwelt by the Spirit of God, has always been part of what holds society back from the swelling tide of lawless living."*<sup>1</sup>

It makes sense then, that when the church/believers in Christ are removed from earth in the rapture, the Holy Spirit is *"out of the way"* (although not absent from earth) and the coming of the lawless one occurs with revelation of full Satanic activity and power.

**Read John 16:7-11. Of what three things will the Holy Spirit (Helper) convict the world?**

Take a moment to thank God for the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life and in the world! Before we dig further into verse 7 and the mystery of lawlessness, let's take a closer look at the word.

**Write how these verses use the word lawlessness (iniquity, sin, wickedness).**

- **Matthew 23:28**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Romans 6:19**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **2 Corinthians 6:14**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Titus 2:14**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **1 John 3:4**

**According to 2 Corinthians 6:14, what is the opposite of lawlessness?**

## How does 1 John 3:4 define lawlessness?

The word lawlessness in the original Greek is *anomia* and means the condition of one without law — either because ignorant of it, or because violating it or contempt and violation of law; iniquity; wickedness.

Now it's time to look at the "mystery of lawlessness."

## Read 2 Thessalonians 2:7a in the following different Bible versions to help wrap your mind around the mystery:

Amplified Bible Classic Edition (AMPC)

*"For the mystery of lawlessness (that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority) is already at work in the world,"*

New International Version (NIV)

*"For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work;"*

The Voice (VOICE)

*"For the mystery of sin is already working its way through the world;"*

## Compare verse 7a to 1 John 4:3:

Holman Christian Study Bible (HCSB)

*But every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist; you have heard that he is coming, and he is already in the world now.*

International Children's Bible (ICB)

*"This is how you can know God's Spirit: One spirit says, 'I believe that Jesus is the Christ who came to earth and became a man.' That Spirit is from God. Another spirit refuses to say this about Jesus. That spirit is not from God but is the spirit of the Enemy of Christ. You have heard that the Enemy of Christ is coming. And now he is already in the world."*

VOICE

*If a spirit does not affirm the true nature of Jesus the Anointed, then that spirit does not come from God and is, in fact, the spirit of the antiChrist. You have heard about its coming; in fact it is already active in the world.*

*"So both Paul and John picture a final time just before the second coming when a person of great demonic power will rise up in rebellion against the true Christ and his people. In the meantime, the satanic characteristics of that figure are always manifesting themselves in the world with greater or lesser dominance. The antichrist is coming and he is here already. 'Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is . . . the antichrist' " (2 John 1:7)"<sup>2</sup>*

- John Piper

What does that mean? Well, all we have to do is look at history and our current world happenings to know that evil, wickedness, sin is present in our world.

*"The mystery of lawlessness is the power unseen, unknown except by its effects, that is the ever working in the world for evil. It is working against the law and will of God, corrupting what has been well done and well begun, causing misery in the natural world and in all that people do."<sup>3</sup>*

- Billy Graham

The Bible consistently warns against this lawlessness or iniquity, and gives laws or commandments to protect and help guide us away from sin so we won't be lawless and susceptible to wickedness. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) and the book of Proverbs are just two examples.

Paul wrote to the Galatians and Colossians about some specific ways sin may manifest itself in our lives.

**Read Galatians 5:19-21. What are we to do to avoid sin according to Galatians 5:16?**

**Read Colossians 3:5-10. On what account is the wrath of God coming?**

**Write what verses 5, 8-10 say to do about sin in our lives.**

In the face of evil or "this present darkness" (Ephesians 6:12) in the world, 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6 tells us: *"But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober."*

Take heart! Remember that we have God's Holy Spirit to empower us, and that Jesus has already overcome the world. (John 16:33)

*"Great is the mystery of lawlessness. However, there is another mystery that is even greater. It is called in the Bible "the mystery of godliness"—the secret, unseen, unmeasured power that lies in the inspiration, guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit, who is within all those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior."*<sup>4</sup>

-Billy Graham



**DIG DEEPER:** When Jesus was born, the Jews were living strictly by the law - 613 commands from the Old Testament. Much time was spent debating the fine points of application, and some like the Pharisees flaunted their compliance to the letter of the law for all to see. Read Matthew 23:23-24 to see what Jesus said about this. When does *lawfulness* become sin?

What are your thoughts about the mystery of lawlessness/spirit of the antichrist being present in the world? Where are you or have been aware of the effects of its evil working against our culture, your neighborhood, or even your own life? What will you do or have done to do battle against this unseen force? (Ephesians 6:13)



**Worship Song:** *Never Lost* by Rita Springer

*"...the man of lawless..., the son of destruction who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God."*

2 Thessalonians 2:3b-4

"I didn't sign up for this!" Have you ever said that when circumstances become difficult or painful? "I don't deserve this," "That's not fair!" and "Why me?" are the cries of our hearts sometimes, even if we don't say them out loud. But, bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people! What's up with that? What is your attitude or mindset when circumstances don't meet your expectations? How do you fight a bad attitude or an unloving response?

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, I ask that you would open the eyes of my heart today so that I would recognize lawlessness in my life, whether in my own flesh or from an enemy attack. Help me surrender my own agenda and comfort zone and move toward greater intimacy with You as I learn and grow.*

**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 again.**

Today we look again at how *"lawlessness is already at work"* (v. 7).

**Look up or write your own definition of lawlessness based on what we've learned so far.**

**Recalling 1 John 4:3, how does the "spirit of the antichrist" compare with the "mystery of lawlessness"?**

**Look up or write your own definition of spirit of the antichrist.**

The man of lawlessness opposes anything of God.

The spirit of the antichrist is against anything of Christ.

**What are some of the attributes of God? Write down what you know, and/or use these scriptures: Exodus 34:6-7, Psalm 99:2-3, Malachi 3:6, Ephesians 2:4, Romans 8:39.**

**According to Matthew 1:23 and John 8:58, who is Jesus?**

God and Jesus - same, same!

For this lesson, we will use just one of the attributes - L O V E - as our example of who and what God and our Lord Jesus Christ are.

**1 John 4:8b says, "God is \_\_\_\_\_."**

**What is the opposite of love? Using a thesaurus (thesaurus.com is easy!), look up antonyms for love and write some down.**

Those are some of the attributes of the lawless, antichrist spirit.

Those are some of the ways that lawlessness is at work in the world.

**Are any of them at work in you?**

Simply, of the opposite of love is unloving. If God is love, anything unloving opposes God, is anti Christ. It follows, then, that anytime I am unloving I oppose God. Lawlessness - also defined as sin, wickedness, iniquity - is at work in me. The spirit of the antichrist that is now in the world is moving against me. Ouch and yikes!

We sin because of our sin nature, also known as the flesh (Romans 7:14, 25; James 1:14). We have no problem coming up with works of the flesh on our own, as listed in Galatians 5:19-21. We can readily identify *"enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy"* as unloving!

However, as if our sin nature were not enough to tempt us to make bad (unloving) choices, the devil and his demons tempt us to sin. Eve in the Garden of Eden, anyone? Jesus in the desert?

## What does 1 Peter 5:8 say?

I think we somewhat understand the devil, Satan, as our enemy, but do we understand how demons - evil or unclean spirits controlled by the devil - participate in promoting wickedness in humans? A demon or unclean spirit can possess a person and have complete control over her actions and/or cause sickness or harm (Mark 1:26, Acts 5:16). But, Christians cannot be demon possessed because the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will not allow it (Romans 8:9, 1 John 4:4). Christians can, however, experience demonic oppression in the forms of temptation and hindrance against our obedience to God. The more we allow this demonic influence and the resulting sin, the stronger it will become. This is spiritual warfare!

Some may have experienced demonic oppression and recognized it, but others may be clueless about the role of evil spirits in their lives because they don't recognize the subtle ways they are being influenced.

C. S. Lewis wrote *The Screwtape Letters* to illustrate demonic influence on human lives. The "letters" are written by an experienced demon to his fledgling nephew, advising him on how best to tempt a man into sin. It is a brilliant (and amusing) expose' of the enemy's shrewd tactics. Here, is a quote:

*"Whatever he (the man) says, let his inner resolution be not to bear whatever comes to him, but to bear it 'for a reasonable period'--and let the reasonable period be shorter than the trial is likely to last. It need not be much shorter; in attacks on patience, chastity, and fortitude, the fun is to make the man yield just when (had he but known it) relief was almost in sight."*<sup>1</sup>

-C. S. Lewis

How can an antichrist/unloving spirit be at work against you, a Christian woman? Let me give you a personal example.

I had been experiencing some relationship difficulties and things had improved but there were still unresolved issues. Due to an unexpected occurrence, the persons involved were suddenly claiming reconciliation and clean slates. Because of the circumstance, I was unable to question these comments and had to swallow my feelings and just go with it. I felt very uncomfortable and unable to be glad about the positive turn of events.

I didn't recognize it, but I was allowing an antichrist spirit - a spirit that was not speaking love - to influence me. How was it tempting me? *Self pity*. Oh poor me, I've had such a hard time. These people have been so mean to me and I didn't deserve it, etc. *Self idolatry*. I am in the right. I didn't sign up for this. I know how this should've turned out. I want the situation to look like this, not that. Etc.

When I recognized the enemy's tactic that was coming against me, I received prayer to fight against it and "kick it off". I had to humble myself and let go of my will, lay myself down and repent of my

sin - my pride and selfishness. Praise God that I was released and able to let go my hard feelings and feel compassion instead. It was a revelation of iniquity, hidden faults of my sin nature that the enemy was targeting.

We used just one of the truths about God - He is love - to explore this idea. What about His righteousness? The opposite is unrighteousness. What about His mercy? Have you ever experienced the temptation to be unmerciful? Satan sets his demons to tempt us in any way he can, but I think he particularly goes for our *iniquities*, the more insidious ways we set ourselves against God. From sins like pride, rebellion, unbelief, selfishness, ambition, and covetousness we must flee temptation and repent.

**How do we counter the attacks enemy and his schemes? Read the following suggestions and write what the example verses say.**

By faith, declare truth, the word of God, over your life (as Jesus did while being tempted in the desert - Matthew 4:4, 7, 10)

- **Ephesians 6:17b**
- **Psalm 91:2**

Test the spirits (against God's word) so you recognize God's Spirit of truth and love.

- **1 Corinthians 2:12**
- **1 John 4:1, 6**

Submit to God and resist the devil.

- **James 4:7**
- **1 Peter 5:8-9**

Pray for deliverance.

- **Matthew 6:9-13**

Be armed for spiritual battle.

- **Ephesians 6:11**

The battle is real, but never forget that Satan and all evil is already defeated. Through Jesus, sin was nailed to the cross and victory over all iniquity was won. (Colossians 2:11-12)

**Take some time to ponder and pray about what you learned today. What is your response?**



**DIG DEEPER:** New Testament Israel seemed to be full of demonic activity as portrayed in the gospels and writings of Paul. Do a word study of "demons" or "unclean spirit" and note how often Jesus himself encountered evil spirits. What did He do? How did the demons respond?

2 Timothy 2:19b says, *"Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."*

*"We all have hidden pockets of iniquity, and we need God's help to see them. You can't repent of something you don't see, so God will help you to see them. As you are in the secret place and meditating in the word, God will... reveal your hidden faults to you."*<sup>2</sup>

-Bob Sorge



Write your thoughts or prayers about what God is revealing to you about iniquity in your life.



**Worship Song:** *Gracefully Broken* by Matt Redman

*"But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day."*

1 Thessalonians 5:4-5a

"Don't you dare lay down on the battlefield!" That's what I hear in my mind when I feel tired, overwhelmed or even afraid when it comes to prayer as a spiritual weapon against the enemy. It was said to me by a dear friend and prayer partner who takes prayer seriously. She spends much time in the "secret place" with God, speaking and listening, praying for spiritual victory in her life and others'. She is an inspiration to me and even when I'm tempted to give up or give in, I don't because her encouraging words keep me going.

***Prayer:** Father in heaven, You are holy. As I finish studying this week, may Your kingdom be present in my life and may Your will be done in my life. Thank You for the provision of Your Word this day. Thank You that I can repent of my sin and am forgiven and help me to submit my will to You and forgive others. When I am tempted by the enemy, deliver me from evil. Thank You that Your faith, love, and the hope of salvation are my light in this world.*

We've learned a lot this week about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not something to dwell upon or worry about, but neither are we to be deceived or complacent.

**Go back and thoughtfully review each day. What is something you learned that was significant to you and what is your response?**

**Day One: The Day of the Lord and the End Times**

**Day Two: The Man of Lawlessness /Antichrist**

**Day Three: The Spirit of Lawlessness in the World**

## Day Four: The Spirit of Lawlessness in My Life

### Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11:

#### The Day of the Lord

*"Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."*

**Paul says that we "are children of light, children of the day." What does that mean to you?**

**In the preceding passage, underline all of the things we are instructed to do as children of the day. Which one(s) stand out to you?**

Verse 8 is similar to Ephesians 6:10-18, the whole armor of God. **According to Ephesians 6:11-12, why do we need to arm ourselves with God's truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and word?**

Ephesians 6:18 says pray *"at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication."* That sounds like "Don't you dare lay down on the battlefield" to me! Let us heed this admonition and remain awake and sober as we live in expectation of the Coming of Our Lord.

As Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12: *"To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."*



**DIG DEEPER:** Go back to Ephesians 6:10-18 and list the pieces of armor. It is said that these are actually characteristics of Jesus. Romans 3:14 says *"put on the Lord Jesus Christ"*. How does that thought help you in the face of the fight against powers of darkness?

*"Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" John 8:12*



In light of our study of end times and spiritual warfare, write a response to Jesus, the Light of the world.



**Worship Song:** *The Warrior is a Child* by Twila Paris and *Every Battle* by Rita Springer (yes, again!)

# Week Two Sources

## Day One

1. Adapted from: *What is the end times timeline?* Retrieved from <https://www.gotquestions.org/end-times-timeline.html>

## Day Three

1. Who/What is the restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2:6? Retrieved from <https://www.gotquestions.org/restrainer.html>
2. John Piper. (2013, February 27). *The Antichrist is Here and Not Yet Here*. Retrieved from <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-antichrist-is-here-and-not-yet-here>
3. Billy Graham. (2013, July 2). *The Mystery of Lawlessness and the Tide of Evil*. Retrieved from <https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/july-august-2013/the-mystery-of-lawlessness-and-the-tide-of-evil/>  
Ibid.

## Day Four

1. C. S. Lewis. *The Screwtape Letters*. (New York: MacMillan Co.; 1943).
2. Bob Sorge. *Secrets of the Secret Place*. (Greenwood, MO: Oasis House, 2001), 21.



WEEK

# three

by Bev Merwin



# introduction

## Our Election in Christ

*"Whatever may be said about the doctrine of election, it is written in the Word of God as with an iron pen, and there is no getting rid of it. To me, it is one of the sweetest and most blessed truths in the whole of revelation, and those who are afraid of it are so because they do not understand it. If they could but know that the Lord had chosen them, it would make their hearts dance for joy."*

- Charles Spurgeon

YES! We will be studying the doctrine of election this week! Hopefully your eyes have not just glazed over or your mind just gone blank. I know that definitely isn't something at the top of your list to study, BUT I do think it is vital to our Christian faith to know and understand. Studying doctrine may not leave us with a warm and fuzzy feeling, but it will keep us from being *"tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."* (Ephesians 4:14).

Why is election necessary? I liked this explanation from Daniel Wallace:

*"Election is necessary because we are totally depraved sinners--sin has touched every aspect of our lives. In other words, we would not choose God unless he first chose us. God uses other believers to communicate the gospel to the lost (Romans 10:14-17). Therefore, we cannot excuse ourselves from sharing the gospel by saying, 'If he's elect, God's going to save him anyway. He doesn't need me to do the job.' It's true that God doesn't need any of us to do his will, but it is equally true that God uses those who are willing to obey him. Consequently, the doctrine of election should motivate us to share the gospel--not out of fear but because we want to be used by God to do his will."*

Our scripture this week is 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

*"But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.*

*May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." NIV*

As we study Biblical election, God's character is revealed. You will see His love for you, that He chose you, He saves you, He calls you, and He is very much a personal God!

So let's begin our journey together--and I don't think you will find it boring or uninteresting -- I think you will find it encouraging! If you have taken on the challenge to write out the passage, go to the back of the book and copy this week's scripture.

*"But, we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord..."*

2 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV

**Prayer:** *Dear Heavenly Father, we love because you first loved us. Help us to understand this great love that you have for us and how this divine election works in Christ. In Jesus name-Amen*

Before we begin today, I would like us to take a little side trip which will help us with our study.

**Write out the dictionary definition for doctrine.**

Biblical doctrine teaches or instructs us in the nature and character of God. Biblical doctrine will show us God's purpose and will for our lives.

So let's begin...

What is God's love?

**What does the Bible say about God's love? Look up the following verses and see!**

**John 3:16**

**Romans 5:8**

**Romans 6:23**

**1 Corinthians 1:18**

**Galatians 2:20**

**Ephesians 2:4-10**

**1 John 4:7**

Our scripture today is 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

*"But, we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord..."(ESV)*

The Thessalonians were a great source of joy for Paul. He continually felt the need to thank God for their response to the gospel message. They were Paul's brothers and sisters in Christ and were beloved by the Lord.

We will be looking at what it means to be *"beloved by the Lord"* and what it means to be elected or chosen to be His beloved.

**Please define the word *beloved* and write out some synonyms (notice it is listed as a adjective and noun):**

John Piper wrote this about 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "I don't think Paul has in mind here the general love of God that he extends to the whole world corporately holding the universe in being, causing the sun to rise, the rain to fall, and the gospel to be preached, and many evidences of his glory and grace to reach the nations. I think he has in mind the particular saving love that Paul describes in Ephesians 2:4-5 when he says that God *'out of the great love with which he loved you made you alive when you were dead through trespasses.'*"<sup>2</sup>

The Greek meaning of beloved used in our scripture is "agapao" it is a verb-a perfect participle which indicates completed action.

We see this agapao love-completed action- with Jesus as he shows his disciples this special love in John 13:1: *"It was just before the Passover Feast Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."* NIV

Jesus would soon die for them-for us all. This love is a saving love, an active love, a special love that is eternal. It is a love that draws us to Christ.

Let's also look at Deuteronomy 7:6-8; *"The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt."* NIV

God did not choose or elect the Israelites based on who they were or what they could do or any prior conditions.

### **Why did the Lord chose the Israelites?**

God elects us not on our works, but because of His grace and for His own purpose. God elects because God loves us. It is a love specifically designed for His beloved!

In Ephesians 1:3-6 Paul reminds us that election is the loving purpose of God; *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."* ESV

### **Look up the following verses and describe how we become His beloved**

**John 1:12**

**John 6:44**

**Romans 3:23-24**

**Titus 3:5-6**

Sweet sisters we are His beloved because we are His chosen. God's love is an electing love. The Bible tells us He elected us before the foundation of the world! He has a special love for His redeemed! It is not the general love that believers and unbelievers received as described in Matthew 5:45, *"He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, sends rain on the just and on the unjust."* The love God has for His beloved is seeking us and pursuing us so that we may have a joyous relationship with Him from now to eternity!

I always want to end our time on a positive note but there is an obvious questions that probably should be asked-

**Do you think election is unloving? Not all will be chosen.**



**Dig Deeper: If we are in Christ, what does God's special love require from us? Acts 20:21, Acts 2:38**



Today we looked at God's special love for those who are in Christ and saw how much we are loved. Take some time now to slow down and ponder God's love for you! You are His beloved. Chosen by Him! Journal your thoughts.



Worship song: Hillsong Worship Broken Vessels (Amazing Grace)

*"But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you..."*

2 Thessalonian 2:13

I smiled when I read this quote from Charles Spurgeon, *"I am thankful God has chosen me before I got here because He surely would not have afterwards."* Amen! I wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Spurgeon and am so thankful that God chose me before I got here!

**Prayer:** *Father God, thank you for your grace and mercy for choosing me before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in your sight. Help me to understand just what being chosen means. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

The Greek word for chose in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 is *haireo*. It is a verb and means: *to choose or to take in the sense of taking for oneself, a choice made by God. Its special significance is to select rather by the act of taking, than by showing preference or favor.*

Recess in elementary school was a long time ago for me, but I remember the agony of waiting to be picked by the captain to be on a team. You hoped to be one of the first chosen and desperately didn't want to be the last! With God we don't have to "wait" to be picked -- He has already chosen us and it doesn't depend on our human abilities, popularity or accomplishments.

*How are we chosen?*

Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:1; *"This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus."*  
NLT

**What do we learn from the following verses about being chosen?**

**Deuteronomy 7:6**

**Psalms 4:3**

**Matthew 22:14**

**John 15:16**

**Ephesians 2:1-9**

**1 Peter 1:1-2**

In 1 Peter 1:1 we see Peter uses the word *elect*. The Greek meaning is *eklektos* which is chosen or picked out. The source of their election is God's grace, not human will.

*How do you know you have been chosen?*

**Let's take a journey through 1 John and see what we can find out-**

**1 John 2:24-25**

**1 John 4:9-10**

**1 John 5:10-11**

**1 John 5:20**

These verses are assurance of salvation verses. **Do you have this assurance?**

We know we have been chosen or elected into God's family because of our response to the gospel message.

*"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." 1 John 5:1-5 NIV*

**Why are some not chosen or elected? I think this is a question we all wrestle with, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 tells us Christ died for us all.**

**Write out Revelations 2:16**

**To the thirsty He will give life. Is one not chosen because one is not thirsty?**



**DIG DEEPER: What does life look like without assurance of salvation?**

**Read the following verses: John 3:5, Romans 2:8, Galatians 5:1-21,, 2 Peter 2:1, and Revelation 21:8**

God's chosen people are those who understand and obey the gospel.

Read Colossians 3:12-17. This is our application sweet sisters! This is how we are to live as chosen sisters in Christ! What is your heart's response? Do you see fruit of the Spirit at work in your life? Do you realize it isn't what we can do, but what has been done for us?



Journal about it!



Worship Song: Who Am I (Casting Crowns)

*"As for us, we can't help but thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are always thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation--a salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and through your belief in the truth."*

2 Thessalonians 2:13 NLT

I Am Not

*"I am now what I might be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am now what I hope to be. But I thank God I am not what I once was, and I can say with the great apostle, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'"*

- John Newton<sup>3</sup>

We will be spending one more day on 2 Thessalonians 2:13. It is such a powerful verse and so important to understand that God loves us, chooses us and saves us. This is the basis of our Christian faith!

**Prayer:** *Holy Spirit we welcome you! You sanctify and glorify. Create in me a new heart O God and renew a steadfast spirit within me. May I be your vessel with a heart afire for you! In Jesus precious name I pray-Amen.*

We are busy women, are we not? Instant communication with our world means instant demands on our lives. If our kids, husband or friends have a need or news, we know about it immediately through texts. Our lives are dictated by the sound of that incoming text. Are we all not guilty of driving and hearing that little sound and grabbing our phones to see the need? And by the end of the day we are exhausted. (Although we may still find the time to check out instagram, snapchat or Facebook) Many of us know we are spread too thin, too much running around with the kids, too many projects at home or work or even at church. And dare I mention the time we spend on our passions or hobbies? We think this is just how life is. It is just for a season. After all we do this in an effort to serve and help/enhance our lives and those around us, right?

Paul writes in Philippians 3:12-14: *"I'm now saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward--to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back."* MSG

Do we have our eyes on the goal? On Day 1 we studied God's love for us. Today we will look at how God's saving love is accomplished in our lives.

So let's start with that question...

*How does God accomplish His work in our life? How do we know His word and purpose for our life?*

By the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit!

**Look up sanctify/sanctification-what does it mean?**

Oswald Chambers wrote: "Sanctification means intense concentration on God's point of view. It means every power of body, soul, and spirit is chained and kept for God's purpose only. It will cause an intense narrowing of all our interests on earth, and an immense broadening of all our interests in God. The reason some of us have not entered into the experience of sanctification is that we have not realized its meaning from God's standpoint. Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the disposition that ruled Him will rule us. Jesus has prayed that we might be one with Him as He is one with the Father. The one and only characteristic of the Holy Spirit in a person is a strong family likeness to Jesus Christ and freedom from everything that is unlike Him."<sup>4</sup>

**1 Peter 3:15 tells us "*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.*" Read the scriptures below and see what sets us apart and what the Holy Spirit uses to sanctify us. Draw a line from the scripture reference to it's correlating topic.**

**John 17:17**

**Sanctified by faith**

**Hebrews 13:12**

**Sanctification demands you leave sin**

**Acts 26:18**

**Sanctified by truth**

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

**Sanctify by the blood of Jesus**

**Please write out Ephesians 1:13 below.**

Many of us know the exact time, date, circumstance we were saved, but sanctification is a process. It is gradual. It is surrendering our life to Jesus and letting the Holy Spirit work through us. How is this done? By reading God's Word, Prayer, Bible studies, listening to and doing the work of the Holy Spirit.

I liked this chart on "Sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit"<sup>5</sup> and wanted to share it with you. It looks at the difference between salvation and sanctification.

**Salvation**

Counts us righteous

Pardon for sin

Considered righteous

Peace with God

Brings life

Regenerated by the Spirit

Germ of the seed

New heart and new spirit

Robes of righteousness

(clean robe)

*The new believer is in Christ*

**Sanctification**

Make us righteous

Power over sin

Given righteousness

Peace of God

Brings victorious life

Received Him in His Fullness

Summer fullness

Holy Spirit within you

Beauties of holiness

(marriage robe/wedding)

*Christ is in the new believer*

If we are people of God, we will live a life that is pleasing to God. We will *think* and *act* according to our faith.

**Dig Deeper: Sisters do we have our eyes on the goal Christ has for us? Where should our daily communication come from?**

**Read: Exodus 19:5-6, Leviticus 11:44-45, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 1 Peter 2:5.**



Write out a typical day for you. Is your daily communication usually dominated by text messages? So your day is go and do and fix? What if your daily communication was dominated by Jesus and lead by the Holy Spirit? Try it and journal how your day goes! Be prepared to share!



Sweet sisters you might like to start with this worship song. I highly recommend you stop and listen to it The Holy Spirit changes us and it changes what we see.



Worship song: Spirit of the Living God (Vertical Worship)

*"He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then brothers stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed onto you whether by word of mouth or by letter."*

2 Thessalonians 2:14-15 NIV

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, Almighty God, You called us. It is because of your call that I am in Christ. It is through the power of your spirit I have faith. Any wisdom I have comes from you! Paul tells us to hold on to You, to stand firm in your teachings so that we may be instructed in your Word. Help us to do this Lord, no matter what we may be going through. In Jesus name, Amen.

**According to 2 Thessalonians 2:14-15, how does God call us and what does He call us to?**

**Let's look at how the Thessalonians in Macedonia were called. Read Acts 16:9-10 and summarize it.**

Paul was given a night vision from God to preach the gospel in Macedonia. When Paul arrived with Silvanus and Timothy to preach the gospel message, God had already been actively working to call the Thessalonians to salvation. God calls us to salvation through the gospel message! His word is active and alive!

In 2 Corinthians 1:26 Paul asks *"think of what you were when you were called."*

So I ask sisters - what were you when you were called?

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5**

**What is God's purpose in calling you?**

## **Look at Colossians 3:1-4. What does it say?**

The glory of our Lord Jesus refers to Christ's second coming. Our great hope in the Christian faith is we will share in this glory!

**Let's look at some more verses on hope of glory and let them be an encouragement to you!**

**Romans 5:2**

**Romans 8:17**

**Colossians 1:27**

**1 Peter 5:10**

Paul goes on to encourage the Thessalonians to stand firm in their faith. Paul tells them to hold to what they have been taught, to be constant and stable in their position in Christ. He is concerned the Thessalonians may waver in the face of persecution and warned them of false teachers and troublemakers and especially false prophets who were predicting the imminent return of Christ.

This is also a warning for us dear sisters. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is also a letter for us, a warning that we need to stay in constant contact with our Savior so we are not in danger of slipping into the desires of this world.

Remember Martha, *"Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her."* Luke 10:41-42 NIV

**We will all be shaken at one time or another. Are we letting the pressure of a trial consume us? What about all the daily bombardments of negative influences and situations we find ourselves in? And what about this ungodly culture? How do we fight? Share with your group some practical ways you stand firm in your faith.**



**DIG DEEPER: Read Galatians 1:11-24, Paul Called by God. What is your “Called by God” story?**

Ladies, God loves you, God chose you, God saved you, God called you through the gospel message by the Holy Spirit. Do you realize how special you are to Him? Journal your answer--

Remember God's Word is active and alive--are you active and alive in God's Word?



Worship Song: Cornerstone (Hillsong)

*"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word."*

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 NIV

Our scripture today is a prayer of encouragement and strength.

**Prayer:** I can't think of a better prayer than our scripture today-so lift your hands and pray out loud our scripture verse 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17. Amen!

As we finish our lesson this week, I pray that you realize what a personal God we have. The doctrine of election teaches us that God loves us, chose us, saves us, calls us all because He wants us to live our life to the fullest in Christ. We are not loved, chosen, saved or called because of anything we have done. It is because of God's grace and what He has done for us!

We learned election is necessary because of our sin nature. We would never choose God *unless* He chose us first. Romans 5:8 tells us *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us."* (NIV) This is what love is. Romans 8:28-30 tells us that election is not just about salvation but also for sanctification.

In our scripture today, Paul wants our Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father to exhort the Thessalonians. He prays that their hearts would be divinely touched. He wants the Thessalonians to be encouraged to do God's will and strengthened to live holy lives.

**Have you ever prayed for God to divinely touch your heart? What happened?**

If we are to be His vessel in every good deed and word, how are we going to accomplish this?

**Colossians 3:17 NIV says:**

"And \_\_\_\_\_ you do, whether in \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, do it all in the name of the \_\_\_\_\_, giving \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ through him."

**What do the following scriptures say about word and deeds?**

**Luke 24:19**

**Acts 7:22**

**Romans 15:17-18**

Wow, Paul says he will not venture to speak anything except what Christ had accomplished through him preaching the gospel message! Our good deeds are to be done for the Lord and our words are to confirm and defend the gospel message. Our hearts are to be established in holiness and by God's grace we receive eternal hope. An eternal encouragement when Christ Jesus returns and we stand in the presence of God our Father.

*"And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens."* Mark 13:27



**Dig Deeper:** As we close today, remember who you are coming to and what has been done for you. **Meditate on Hebrews 12:2 and Mark 16:6**

Think of the cross, the empty tomb, and that Jesus has risen! What strength He can give you, what comfort you will find, and what power you will receive!



Write out Ephesians 3:17-19 in your own words and know that you can go confidently to Him in prayer. Thank Him!



Worship song: This I Believe, The Creed (Hillsong Worship)

# Week Three Sources

## DAY ONE

1. Daniel Wallace, article on *My Understanding of the Biblical Doctrine of Election*
2. John Piper, sermon, *God Has Given Us Good Hope Through Grace Part 1*

## DAY TWO

3. Goodreads.com
4. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, Barbour and Company, Westwood, NJ
5. Jordan Irvin, article, *Sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit*

## Other References used for this study:

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Dr J Vernon McGee, sermon, *2 Thessalonians 2:13-17*

Colin Smith, sermon, *The Family of God Standing Firm*

## Commentaries

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WEEK

# four

by Kara Whalley



# *Introduction*

## **The Heart of Discipleship**

Cultivating a hard work ethic is something I think about often. I have three children and it is like pulling teeth to get them to pick up their toys. They are absolutely uninterested in putting in any effort at all to keep the house clean and tidy. So how do I get them to learn the value of hard work when they won't even pick up their dirty clothes?

Luckily I have lots of time ahead of me to train them how to take out the trash. But, the Thessalonian believers Paul was writing to weren't little children and yet some were having a very hard time doing work. Commentators speculate that they weren't working because they believed Jesus was about to return. Others, believe they were living off Christian generosity and enjoying the luxury of not working. At any rate, they were using this wasted time to be idle, disruptive and busybodies.

In our study we will first dive into Paul's prayers for himself and the Thessalonian church, seeing that they were actually doing a lot right. But unfortunately, the few who weren't working were tiring out the hard working Christians. And it safe to assume the congregation felt the same way I do sometimes. Can't you pick up a few toys and pull your weight around here?!

Let's dive into scripture and see what hardworking Paul had to say about these lazy Christians.

*Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for giving me prayer to communicate with you. Teach me about the power in prayer to cause even greater advancement in your kingdom. Help me to develop an intimate prayer life with you and see great change in my life and in the lives of others.*

**Please read the verses we will be discussing today and write them in the back of the book if you wish.**

*"As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance." 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5*

Paul valued prayer for himself and others. He wasn't shy about asking people to pray for him and his ministry. He knew he needed prayer in sharing the gospel with others and having it affect their lives, like it did with the Thessalonian church. David Guzik writes, "Paul's prayer request makes us wonder how often the work of God's Word is hindered by our prayerlessness."<sup>1</sup>

The definition of hinder is: to cause delay, interruption, or difficulty in; hamper; impede, or to prevent from doing, acting, or happening; to stop.

It is a sobering thought that my prayerlessness could be causing delay or even prevent God's work from going forward in someone's life in that moment. God is always faithful to use someone else later, but still I don't want to be slowing things down. The Bible says in Isaiah 55:11, "...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

**Why do you think God made prayer essential in seeing His work thrive?**

**How often are you praying for your ministry *before* going out and doing the work it involves?**

Prayer is the essential element in having the Word spread quickly and be honored by those hearing

it. So many other religions are working diligently to get their message to the world. How much more should Christians, who have the truth, want the Gospel to be heard and received before another false religion is believed?



**DIG DEEPER:** Read Acts 2:14-47 for a radical example of how the gospel was heard and honored by the early church.

Paul was up against wicked and evil people in every city he entered. He was opposed and physically beaten by people who didn't agree with the gospel message he preached. But he had confidence in the Lord because he knew that the Lord is faithful: faithful to guide him, protect him and not let him encounter anything outside of God's will for him. This confidence in the Lord empowered Paul to be bold in living out his faith even when it was unpopular, and to share the gospel even when it was rejected. The rejection, opposition, and danger he experienced was nothing to him because of what he had in Jesus.

**What are some of your fears in sharing the gospel? Think specifically of a person or group you are trying to reach.**

**How does having "confidence in the Lord" help us to overcome any fear we may have? Fill in the blanks from 2 Thessalonians 3:3. (every fill-in-the-blank is in the NIV version)**

**"But the Lord is \_\_\_\_\_, and he will \_\_\_\_\_ you and \_\_\_\_\_ you from the evil one."**

Paul's language switches from talking about "we" to "you" and he once again, is encouraging the Thessalonian church. Just as God was protecting Paul from the evil one, He was also protecting the Christian church. Just because Paul was a more noticeable figure didn't mean he received better guidance and protection. God did the same for them as He did for Paul. And He will for you too! Because of the great faith of the Thessalonian church from the start, Paul knew that the church would continue in obedience with the teachings that they had heard from him. Let's get eager to be obedient also!

1 Peter 1:1-2 says, *"...to God's elect...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance."*

We were chosen to be obedient to Jesus Christ. He didn't count us worthy in and of ourselves, but because we have been sprinkled by the blood of Jesus. Since we have the sanctifying work of the Spirit in our hearts, we can be obedient.

**Paul noted two qualities we would need on our journey to obedience in 2 Thessalonians 3:5. Please fill in the blanks.**

***"May the Lord direct your hearts into God's \_\_\_\_\_ and Christ's \_\_\_\_\_."***

This church wasn't perfect. They had their issues as we will see, yet they were full of love and perseverance which Paul says he boasted about to the other churches. We could all use more love and perseverance in our walk with Christ. The Bible says that suffering and trials produce perseverance in us. James 1:4 says, *"Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."* My first instincts are to run from suffering and trials, but we need to press into Jesus more and more in our sufferings. 1 Peter 4:13 tells us, *"But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."* Perseverance is a quality that calls us to be eternal minded and see beyond the temporary pain and affliction to the end goal of the joy of Christ being revealed.



Pick a topic and journal about either your prayer life or your walk of obedience.



Worship song: "In Christ Alone" by Lauren Daigle

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, Please give me insight and discernment today about what it looks like to be idle and disruptive. Help me to look inward before I look outward. And may you bring changes where I fall short and protect me, and the church body, from becoming idle or disruptive.

Please read the verses we will be discussing today and write them in the back of the book if you wish.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 *"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us."*

Idleness was a very real problem for the church in Thessalonica. This command in 2 Thessalonians came after a previous warning in 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 *"And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone."*

We see these two exact same words used once again in 2 Thessalonians. This tells us that idleness and disruptiveness were still issues that had not been squashed.

Let's look at some verses in the Bible about idle and disruptive people to get a better, more full picture of what it looks like.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 *"Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well."*

1 Timothy 5:13 *"Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to."*

**What do you note from these two verses about idleness?**

I see two defined categories. There is idleness in speech and idleness in work or what we do. There are those that talk too much, gossip, talk nonsense or ramble, and those that stir up strife with what they say.

This could look like bringing up hot button issues when we shouldn't, which only causes anger and division. This could also look like sharing information about others that isn't ours to tell. As well as sharing confidential information as a "prayer request" without the consent or knowledge of the per-

son referenced. We can fool ourselves into thinking that we aren't gossiping when we casually portray someone in a negative light. And sometimes, we can ramble or not think before we speak and get ourselves in a pickle.

**Do your words ever fall into any of these categories? Write down some honest insights into your life.**

As Christians, our words need to be purposeful and intentional. The purpose of our words is two-fold, to glorify God and to bless others. Unfortunately, we use our words for the opposite, to curse God and hurt others. This can be done either intentionally or unintentionally. The Apostle James shows us the great power that our words have by using some real life examples of little things creating an extensive impact.

In James 3:3 he compares the tongue to a bit in the mouth of a horse controlling its whole body and a huge ship guided by a small rudder. And again in verse 5, James compares the tongue to a small fire setting an entire forest aflame and lastly, the NIV version says that the tongue can set your whole life on fire.

Idleness in our words will always end in ruin, both of ourselves and others. However, imagine what impact we could have if we used our words purposefully and with the intention to glorify God and bless others. Our words would be life-giving, people-affirming, and Jesus-exalting. All of which bring growth, grace, and truth!

Another issue was the Thessalonians being idle with their hands. During this time, the church had adopted the "Acts Model" of Christian living.

Please read Acts 2:42-47. Did you read that they had everything in common? And that they sold their property and possessions to give to others in need? This was communal living at its finest. Maybe not sharing a home literally, but sharing something even harder...money and possessions. Imagine living in a community like San Clemente where it was understood that your possessions, first belonged to God, and secondly never belonged to you. And also where the expectation was to give from what you had earned to those who either ask or need it.

**How would you do in an environment like that?**

**This was the model that Jesus set for His church. Do you think this model is a good model for living?**



**DIG DEEPER:** Look at these scripture references for further study on the model that Jesus' set for his church in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 and 2 Corinthians 9:1-15.

Like the law, the model wasn't failing, but people were. You could imagine that in a system where everything was shared, there were many who took advantage of it. Some were working incredibly hard to provide for their own families and the greater Christian community while other able bodied people were unwilling to work and wanted the free hand out. They were not willing to contribute to the community, but rather "leech" off the generosity of others. Not only that, but with the extra time they had, they were being busybodies around town. I would assume this would have been extremely frustrating for those working hard and would cause much division.

Because of this tendency to "leech" and "take", the early church actually had strict rules for who could receive monetary support because many had abused the system.

Here is an example in 1 Timothy 5: 9-16 (ESV)

*"Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan. If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows."* 1 Timothy 5:9-16

**How can we be better examples of Christian generosity like the early church?**

**And in what ways are we being "takers" from the church, and the body of Christ, instead of givers?**



Read and journal about this quote from Charles Spurgeon.

Charles spurgeon (qtd. in Guzik) writes, "But well doing consists in taking down the shutters and selling your goods; tucking up your shirt sleeves and doing a good day's work; sweeping the carpets and dusting the chairs, if you happen to be a domestic servant. Well doing is attending to the duties that arise out of our relationships in life – attending carefully to them, and seeing that in nothing we are eye-servers and men-pleasers, but in everything are seeking to serve God."<sup>1</sup>



Worship song: "We Turn our Eyes" by Travis Cottrell

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, Please help me to be worthy of the calling of being a discipler. Please bring people my way to teach how to live lives surrendered to Jesus. May I also live a life worthy of being imitated by those around me.

Please read the verses we will be discussing today and write them in the back of the book if you wish.

*"For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate." 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9*

Paul was a wonderful example for the Thessalonian church to follow. Because he so deeply cared for them, he wanted to disciple them in the right ways of living in order to glorify God. When he lived with the Thessalonians he worked hard as a tentmaker to earn his wages. He paid for his own food and worked day and night not to be a burden. He worked hard ministering to the church, teaching, correcting, and encouraging. It would have been easy for Paul to expect for his basic needs to be taken care of. However, Paul did the exact opposite. Paul wanted to "walk the talk" and not prescribe to them something that he did not do himself. And ultimately, Paul didn't want them living idle disruptive lives that led to sin. His desire was for them to stay pure, holy, and set apart for the coming of Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7, Paul says, *"And you became imitators of us and of the Lord for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia."*

He wanted the Thessalonians to be imitators of him and therefore, of the Lord. This is the heart of discipleship. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8 Paul states, *"...because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."*

**What two things did Paul share?**

The kind of discipleship that Paul engaged in took time and being with each other. The new believers got to watch Paul in action and follow his example of hard work, preaching the Gospel, taking care of the needy and so much more. I can learn a lot from reading a book or listening to a podcast, but nothing helps me learn quicker than one-on-one investment into my life. My childhood friend just came and stayed with me for a few days and watching her talk to and care for my three kids impacted me greatly and taught me so much about parenthood more quickly and effectively than anything else could have.

**Is your life one that others can imitate?**

**Do you have others in your life that you try to imitate?**

**Who are they and why are they worth imitating?**

Part of being a discipler is not holding back the hard parts of the Bible that may cause questioning or conviction in the disciple. Our job is to give the entirety of the Word and let God sink it in to each heart. In Acts 20:18- 21 Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders when he says, *"...you yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink back from declaring anything to you that was profitable, and teaching you in public from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."* He didn't shrink back in telling them anything from Scripture. This is also our duty as disciplers.



**DIG DEEPER:** Read Acts 19 to see a wonderful example of Paul discipling the believers in Ephesus.

Also, in reminding the church at Thessalonica about his work ethic and providing for himself, Paul was refuting any claim that he was preaching the gospel for his own personal gain. He wanted to show the church that he was there for the right reasons, and not to strike it rich. In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8, Paul explains his heart in coming to the church and that it wasn't in vain, error, impurity, or an attempt to deceive. They didn't use flattery, weren't greedy, nor sought glory from other people. Wow, now there is a list for you of some pretty harsh criticism that probably fell upon Paul! Paul was distinguishing himself from charlatans, cynic philosophers, and Jewish false prophets.

In 1 Corinthians 9:14-19, Paul is writing to the Corinthian church about the same thing. Please read this section of Scripture.

**Does Paul have the right to earn wages for being a missionary?**

**Why doesn't he use this right?**

In verse 17 in the ESV version, Paul says he has been entrusted with a stewardship. Paul's stewardship is proclaiming the gospel and its blessings, whether or not, he benefits materially.

**In 1 Corinthians 9:19, Paul says, *"Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, \_\_\_\_\_."***

Isn't that amazing that one of Paul's goals was to win as many as possible for Christ? He refused taking money from the church in order to win as many as possible and not let a question of his character get in the way at all, though he had the right.

**Is this your heart for the kingdom to see as many as possible saved?**

**Not only that, but what in your life may be standing in the way of someone accepting Christ as their Savior?**

**What is something God is asking you to repent of, walk away from, or get rid of that would hinder His gospel?**



Use this time to pray and journal about who you can share with and disciple? If no one comes to mind, pray God would put someone in your life to share with.



Worship song: "Grace to Grace" by Hillsong Worship

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, Teach me today about working for your kingdom. Help me to be a hard worker and receive the joy of your provision through work. Let me never tire of doing the good works that you planned for me long ago.*

Please read the verses we will be discussing today and write them in the back of the book if you wish.

**Today we are going over the topic of work. Name a few types of work you can think of.**

In the Bible the word "work" has many different meanings in the Greek and Hebrew. Today's text refers to the work that we do with our hands. It could be a vocational job, the work of a homemaker, a caretaker, a missionary, etc. At different seasons of our life work is going to look differently, but it always involves effort.

Before diving into our text, let's first look at some verses concerning work throughout the New and Old Testament. In Genesis, God was hard at work before anyone existed. God is the originator of work and is busy and always at work. He worked to create the earth and everything in it. Even now He is spreading His gospel, sending angels to do His work, answering prayers, healing, speaking into the hearts of believers, and much more. He is "24/7" engaged in each of our lives. Now that sounds like hard work to me!

**Below are ten verses concerning work. Please circle the word "work" in each verse.**

Here are two verses about the work God did and does.

- *"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work." Genesis 2:2*
- *"Then the LORD said: 'I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you.'" Exodus 34:10*

Then God gave the Israelites direction on working.

- *"Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed." Exodus 23:12*

When Jesus came to earth He continued the work of God. Jesus was a carpenter, as well as a minister on earth. In these verses, Jesus is speaking about work.

- *"My food," said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.'" John 4:34*
- *"In his defense Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am*

*working.” John 5:17*

- *“As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.” John 9:4*

These are verses where the New Testament speaks about hard work.

- *“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Acts 20:35*
- *“...their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work.” 1 Corinthians 3:13*
- *“Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.” Ephesians 4:28*

**What are some things that you noticed about work in these verses?**

Please read our text for today in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13.

*“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.’ We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.” 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13*

At first glance Paul’s rule might seem harsh, but really it is a blessing. He was giving the rule to those unwilling to work, not to those who can’t. There are certainly people who physically and mentally cannot work ever or at certain times in their life. This rule is a blessing because God typically provides for our needs through our work. We get to see God in action as we work each day and see His blessing, provision, and abundance in our lives. God can provide any way He pleases and He certainly does in many different ways, but mostly in the daily work that we do. We once again see the words idle and disruptive in these verses as well as being a busybody. Sometimes we use the word busybody about people who don’t ever stop working but really it means someone who gets no work done at all.

Paul commands and urges the reader to settle down and get a job and earn the food they eat. God has made us for work just like He made Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to oversee the animals and the land.

**What kind of work do you do?**

**Do you see yourself as a hard worker contributing to your own needs and/or the needs of others?**

For the Thessalonian believers who were working hard it must have been frustrating and discouraging to see others mooching off the church. It may have caused them to think "Why am I working so hard if you are galavanting around all day?" But Paul encourages them not to tire of doing good.

**Do you tire of doing good sometimes and want to give up? List some reasons why we might tire?**

Hebrews 12:3, *"Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."*

When you may tire of doing good, consider Christ and all he went through for you. We all need sabbaths and refreshment, but that should only spur us on to get back in the game and do all the good we can do.



**DIG DEEPER:** Read the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25: 14-30 and note what you learn about work.



Write about ways that you can prepare each morning to do the good works that God has for you. That may be reading and praying in the morning, exercising, eating a good breakfast, etc.



Worship: "Nobody Loves Me Like You" by Chris Tomlin

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, Please help me to understand your Word concerning how to deal with the disobedient believer. This isn't an easy or light topic, so I pray that you help me discern truth and value your Word above how I may feel.

Please read the verses we will be discussing today and write them in the back of the book if you wish.

*"Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer." 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15*

We already know from our previous days of study that there were some who continued to be idle and disruptive. They had already been warned in the first letter to the Thessalonians and now they were commanded to settle down and earn the food they eat. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6 the brothers and sisters in the church were told to keep away from believers who were idle and disruptive. They had been warned and now came the consequence.

**In verse 14, how were the disobedient believers supposed to feel?**

To be ashamed is defined as when a person feels shame; distressed or embarrassed by feelings of guilt, foolishness, or disgrace.

To be condemned is defined as to express an unfavorable or adverse judgment on; indicate strong disapproval of; censure. Or to pronounce to be guilty; sentence to punishment.



**DIG DEEPER:** Do a word study of judge and condemn on BlueLetterBible.com

The Bible clearly says that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. Condemnation is telling someone they are guilty of eternal judgment and that is only Jesus' job. To be ashamed is something entirely different. It's feeling embarrassed, guilty, foolish, and just plain bad about what you did or didn't do. The goal of Paul's command for dissociation was not for the believer to feel punished and hated. Rather, that they feel sad that they cannot remain in fellowship with the other believers until they repent.

David Guzik writes, "In an indirect way, Paul showed that his vision for the church was that it should be such a place of love and comfort that one would genuinely feel sad and sorry to be excluded from the church. Churches today should also fit that description."<sup>1</sup>

We see Paul's heart in this matter when he says to not regard them as an enemy, but to warn them as a fellow believer. His desire is that they would come to repentance.

## **Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-11.**

*"Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter." 2 Corinthians 7:8-11*

### **Who intended these believers to become sorrowful?**

**2 Corinthians 7:10 says, "Godly sorrow leads to \_\_\_\_\_ and leaves no \_\_\_\_\_, but worldly sorrow brings \_\_\_\_\_."**

### **What did godly sorrow produce in verse 11?**

The goal of what some might call church discipline is for repentance and a turning away from a certain sin. Most American Christian churches today have strayed from this model of disassociating with someone who repeatedly sins after being confronted and warned. But, I think through our study we can see the original intent was for protecting the church body, drawing back a wayward believer, and winning a soul for eternity. When done in the right way, this is an act of love and caring about someone's eternal position so much that you would withdraw from that person hoping that they might return. And they are not to be treated as an enemy. Discipling a fellow Christian is not about ignoring them in public and not saying hello, but rather not allowing them to participate in fellowship at church or with the body. We are always to be kind and full of grace!

### **Have you seen disassociation with a believer because of repeated sin before?**

Let's read an intense example of removing a believing sinner from the church in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

### **In verse 1 and 2 what does it say the man did and what was the church to do?**

### **In verse 4 what does it say the goal of removing him is?**

There were two reasons for expelling the man from church. One was to save his soul in the end. The other was to preserve the holiness of the church and the gospel and not give the appearance of condoning sinful behavior.

**Do you think it hurts the Christian churches witness when we allow flagrant, unrepentant sinners, whatever the sin, to remain in the church, calling themselves Christians?**

**In verse 12 who does it say that Christians are to judge? Can you judge and condemn the sin without judging a believer's eternal standing?**

Luke 6:37-38 says, *"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned: forgive and you will be forgiven; give and it will be given to you."* The ESV Study Bible explains that, "Jesus is not ruling out legitimate use of discernment, church discipline, and law courts, but is rather admonishing his listeners to discontinue their tendency to criticize and find fault with others."<sup>2</sup> (pg. 1963) So again, we see the judging another believer's actions are condoned but not criticizing with a prideful spirit.

Christians shouldn't beat each other up but grow each other up in the Lord. We do this in a kind, loving, gracious and appropriate way. It's not random or reckless, but it is thoughtful. Also, there is biblical caution that we need to be living righteously before we go out and reprimand others. Wayward people aren't going to be beat up into a lifestyle of submission. They need to be encouraged so that the change of the heart becomes a passion of their own.

**How has this study possibly changed any negative feelings you might have on this topic?**



Take some time to journal and pray about possibly warning another believer who is in habitual sin.



Worship Song: "Build My Life" by Pat Barrett

We are always  
to be  
Kind  
and  
full of  
Grace.

# Week Four Sources

## DAY ONE

1. Guzik, David. "2 Thessalonians 3-Guidance for Church Life." [www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-thessalonians-3/](http://www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-thessalonians-3/). Accessed February 25, 2019.

## DAY TWO

1. Guzik, David. "2 Thessalonians 3-Guidance for Church Life." [www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-thessalonians-3/](http://www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-thessalonians-3/). Accessed February 25, 2019.

## DAY THREE

1. Guzik, David. "2 Thessalonians 3-Guidance for Church Life." [www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-thessalonians-3/](http://www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-thessalonians-3/). Accessed February 25, 2019.

ESV Study Bible. English Standard Version, Crossway, 2011.



WEEK

five

by Kelley Visca



Hi faithful, beautiful, Jesus girls! (YES - that's YOU!)

Drumroll please.... TA DA! You have officially made it to the end of Bible Study! Congratulations! There's a standing ovation going on in heaven, as your steadfastness and commitment to growing IN and living OUT God's word is celebrated! Well done, good and faithful servants! I applaud you, too!

Throughout this study, we've had the opportunity to come alongside Paul, as he pours his heart out to the faithful believers in Thessalonica, on behalf of himself, as well as Silas and Timothy. So, to sum it all up using the divisions in the New Living Translation, along with my added alliteration (it's a fun challenge!), we have the following:

1:1-2            Premise: an introduction

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1:3-12           Persecution and Protection

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2:1-12           Prediction and Prophecy

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2:13-17          Praise and Perseverance

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3:1-5            Prayer and Patience

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3:6-15           Productivity and Purposefulness

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3:16-18          Peace and Proof

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Take a few minutes to reread the entirety of this letter and bullet point ONE take-away from each section. It could be an "Aha!" moment you had, a lesson you learned, or a new insight you gleaned. (And for the final section, it may be what first strikes you, as we prepare to study these verses this week).

As I prayerfully considered the direction the Lord was prompting me to head with these last few verses, I felt the heavy burdens many of you are carrying, and the need to come alongside and help you offload these weights and concerns and discover the peace that passes understanding. This is the kind of peace that Paul is offering to the Thessalonian believers and is reminding us of, too. *Every "solution" to any "problem" can only be found at the foot of the cross, when we come in humility with a humble heart. We need to look to the precious words of Scripture to lead and to guide us, which is where we need to feast.*

So for your final five days of homework, I plan on making your mouth water and your stomach growl as you hunger and thirst for God's Word, as the Lord offers to you (imagine a formally-dressed waiter in a tuxedo, presenting a sterling silver tray with a polished, domed lid, about to reveal its contents with flair and sophistication): a Recipe for *Peace*.

All recipes have ingredients that need to be included and steps that need to be followed to produce a delicious, mouth-watering result that will satiate your appetite and satisfy your cravings. However, these recipes won't do you any good organized into cute little recipe boxes, saved on a recipe website, or pinned on Pinterest. You need to take time to choose a recipe carefully, shop for the ingredients diligently, make the effort to follow the directions meticulously, and work through the preparation process wisely to produce a masterpiece. The Bible is full of "recipes" and "ingredients" which are worthy of a 3-star Michelin review (the highest accolade in the culinary world). We are going to "dig in" and get cooking, so get ready to create a peace pie! Before you don your chef's hat, let's whet our appetite and take a look at how the Bible nourishes us.

We are to hunger and thirst for the life-giving quality of the Word of God.

**How does 1 Peter 2:2 NKJ, describe the Word?**

**According to Matthew 5:6, what are we encouraged to hunger and thirst for?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (NLT) and \_\_\_\_\_ (NIV).

**And what claim does Jesus make about himself in John 6:35 NLT? "** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_."

Look up Matthew 4:4 in the NLT, as Jesus refutes and rebukes Satan, and write it below:

Where in Scripture does this verse originally appear?

What conclusion and connection can you draw from these verses?

I hope you're hungry! Here's how your daily study will be broken down:

Each day will focus on a "recipe for peace." Today, we will focus on the peace that passes understanding that comes from Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Over the remaining days, we will examine what peace would look like in four different areas of your life, and I'll also take you through a four-course meal. Each of those days, I'll share a personal anecdote to set the stage, and we will also delve into Scripture to examine the examples God has given us to glean from and to follow. You're going to be asked to "whip up a recipe" of your own by applying the truths you digest from the day's study into your own life. In this way, your life will be like *"a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God"* (2 Corinthians 2:15 NLT). *Almost* as good as the aroma of freshly baked bread or warm chocolate chip cookies!

Here's your "shopping list of ingredients" and a "preview" of what to expect each day:

- **Praise** - Take a few minutes to listen to the suggested worship song to prepare your heart.
- **Prayer** - Pray, *out loud*, the "prayer starter," and feel free to "spice it up" with your own requests, as well. There's just something about hearing yourself literally *call out* to the Lord that is incredibly powerful.
- **Print** - Write the day's scrumptious Scripture in the back of the book if you'd like.
- **Piece de Resistance** - The main lesson for the day: Your "recipe"
- **Probe** - Additional verses to dig deeper
- **Practice** - Live out the "piece" of the "peace" the Lord puts before you.
- **Ponder** - Journal Prompt
- **Promote** - Discussion question to consider

Ok, Master Chefs! Let's begin with an abbreviated Day One!



## **Praise** - "Perfect Peace" by Laura Story

**Prayer** - *Dear Heavenly Father, as I come before you, help me to be still. To slow down. To breathe deeply. To stop thinking about, perhaps worrying about, anything right now. Fill me with your Holy Spirit. Yes Lord. Empty me of myself. Fill me to overflowing. My heart desires more of you and less of me. Help me understand what it means to experience Your peace. Open my eyes to see and my heart to receive all You have for me. Thank you, Lord. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



**Print** - Write the day's scrumptious Scripture in the back of the book if you'd like: 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

**Piece de Resistance** - The main lesson for the day: "Recipe for Peace"

In 2 Thessalonians 3:16, Paul's exhorts his listeners with the following blessing: *"Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all!"*

The world will try to offer you its solution for peace - but real, lasting peace ONLY comes through Jesus Christ. It can't be found in a treaty declaring a truce, a formal handshake, a legal settlement for reconciliation, or a catchy song from the 1960's. None of these things last.

Look up *peace* in a dictionary **What is the definition?**

**What are some synonyms for peace?**

**What are some antonyms?**

I don't know about you, but reading the list of synonyms delights my heart, much like chocolate lava cake! And the list of antonyms leaves me with a heavy feeling in the pit of my stomach, like when I've overeaten at a buffet! Let's work towards peace in every area of our lives.

Turn to Philippians 4:4-9 NLT for God's recipe for a peace that endures and fill in the blanks accordingly.

For our recipe today, the **first ingredient** is in verse 4: **PRAISE!**

**We are to be full of \_\_\_\_\_ and we are to \_\_\_\_\_.** That's a double portion.

We are to thank God and be full of joy in all circumstances. Sometimes that may be challenging,

but there is ALWAYS a reason to be thankful. And remember, biblical peace isn't a feeling; it's a state of being, and it's unrelated to our circumstances. Maintaining this perspective makes it easier to give God praise.

The **second ingredient** is in verse 5: **POLITENESS!**

We are to let everyone - every *single* one (this includes the driver who cut you off on the road, the rude employee at the store, the teenagers texting during a movie, and everyone else who can be annoying!) see that **we are** \_\_\_\_\_ **in ALL we do**. Add heaping amounts of this to your day. Make it a point to intentionally compliment at least one person daily.

**Who is one person today you can encourage?**

The **third ingredient** for your peace pie is in verse 6: **PRAYER**.

Remember, this is simply a conversation with God. Talk to Him, pour out your heart to Him as you cry out in joy or in sorrow. God welcomes it all and wants to hear it all. Take a moment now to chat with the Lord.

The **fourth ingredient** is in verse 8: **PRACTICE**.

We need to get into a daily habit of fixing our thoughts on **what is** \_\_\_\_\_, **and** \_\_\_\_\_, **and** \_\_\_\_\_, **and** \_\_\_\_\_, **and** \_\_\_\_\_. We need to think about things that **are** \_\_\_\_\_ **and worthy of** \_\_\_\_\_.

If you struggle with these things, it would make an excellent checklist. Ask yourself: "Is what I'm thinking of doing or saying true, (etcetera)?"

So, if you include all of the ingredients and follow the directions carefully, you will have what the Bible promises us in Philippians 4:7 NLT: **"Then you will experience God's peace, which \_\_\_\_\_ anything we can understand. His peace will guard your \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as you \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ Jesus."**

And as we practice making our recipe, improving upon it each time, the end of verse 9 tells us that **"the God of peace will be \_\_\_\_\_."**

Our circumstances may not change. But the peace that comes from God will flow over us because it's deeply rooted and grounded in our faith. We can trust Jesus even in the darkest, saddest, and scariest moments of our life. There can be "war," fighting, and hostility around us, but God has us in the eye of the storm: a place of peace, quiet, and rest. That sounds deliciously inviting!

- **Probe** - Look up these additional verses about peace:

**Psalms 29:11**

**Isaiah 9:6**

**Isaiah 26:3**

**Romans 5:1**

**Colossians 3:15**

- **Practice** - Live out the "piece" of the "peace" the Lord puts before you:

**Commit to the Lord one area of your life where you need to consistently pray for God's peace to fill, and write it here:**



- **Ponder** - Journal Prompt: Recall a time when you experienced, first-hand, the peace that passes understanding. Praise God for reminding you of HIS faithfulness!

- **Promote** - Discussion question to consider: When did you feel God's overwhelming peace? How have you used this as an opportunity to share your testimony? Or how would you like God to give you that chance?



**Praise** - "Legacy" by Nichole Nordeman

**Prayer** - *Dear Heavenly Father, I want to leave a legacy in the workplace. Whether that is at home or out in "the world," let my light shine for You, Jesus. Help me be a peacemaker and a peacekeeper. Let me die to my own wants, needs, and preferences, and help me to elevate others. I desire to work diligently, not to earn more money, or accolades from co-workers or my boss, but I want to be pleasing to You. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.*



**Print** - Write the day's scrumptious Scripture in the back of the book if you'd like: Colossians 3:23

**Piece de Resistance** - "Recipe for Peace in the Workplace"

I am blessed beyond measure to work as a junior high teacher at a small, private Christian school where the climate is generally peaceful with my coworkers, but it can get quite animated and spirited with the variety of personalities, ability levels, and learning challenges my students face in my classroom. I think of them like the variety of appetizers you might encounter at a party: some are simple and straightforward, like veggies and hummus; others are complicated and require interpretation, like Coquilles Saint-Jacques; while a few are deep and take some unearthing, like getting to the bottom of a seven-layer dip; and then there are the unpredictable ones, like sweet and sour meatballs.

If you work outside the home, if you're a stay-at home-mom, or if you volunteer for an organization; any time you are working with people, you'll definitely encounter a collection of personalities. Couple that with the demands of the job: the phone is ringing off the hook, your email box is numbering in the tens or hundreds, your calendar is filled with meetings and deadlines, and chaos is the norm, rather than the exception. How do you usually handle it?

**Do you tend to get caught up in the whirlwind or do you remain calm and somewhat detached from the pandemonium? Give an example:**

Perhaps your office environment also includes self-promoters, gossips, back-stabbers, and employees who bend the truth on a regular basis. It can be extraordinarily challenging to be the peaceful light of Jesus in a dark and turbulent world and to be a peacemaker.

What is the recipe, then for keeping peace in the workplace? Let's look to Joseph's story in the book of Genesis for an example. Skim through Genesis 37 for an account of Joseph and read about his series of unfortunate events.

**What are three words you would used to describe Joseph?**

Jump ahead and read Genesis 39. Joseph finds himself in the employment of Potiphar, an Egyptian officer and captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the King of Egypt (verse 1). He finds himself in a foreign land, forced into servitude, and yet he never forgets who or whose he is.

**What does verse 2 say regarding Joseph's accomplishments?**

**Consequently, Potiphar notices and gives him what promotion, according to verse 4?**

**What are the results?**

It's SO true, ladies! When you commit your plans to the Lord, you can expect success, according to Proverbs 16:3. The school where I teach, Pathway, relies on the Lord's provision through donations to make up the difference between tuition and the cost to educate each student. There have been several occasions where the viability and livelihood of the school was in question, as we fervently prayed that the Lord would provide. My school was "birthed" through praying and committing each and every component to the Lord. And He was, and continues to be, faithful. I remember one morning, when we were on the brink of closing our doors, and a \$50,000 donation arrived in the mail! God is good!

**Can you recall a time when the Lord provided at your workplace? Or maybe a time when you prayed for a job and the Lord answered your prayer?**

The Lord was indeed providing for Joseph: he had a comfortable place to sleep and all the food he could possibly desire! All was peaceful... until (cue suspenseful music)... Potiphar's wife attempted to make an offer to Joseph he almost couldn't refuse. She tried to force herself upon him. Joseph didn't fall for the temptation, however. He wisely called it what it was.

**According to verse 9, it's ... a \_\_\_\_\_ and**

**a \_\_\_\_\_ against God.**

We go on to read that Potiphar believed his wife's lies about Joseph being the aggressor, and Joseph found himself in jail. He was falsely accused for a crime he did not commit. That led to unrest and a lack of peace both in the household, and most likely in Joseph's heart, as well. And yet, Joseph remained unwavering. Verse 21 tells us, *"But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love."*

It's a horrible feeling when you are blamed for something you didn't do. False accusations can certainly lead to unrest and a lack of peace. Years ago, I was the president of a community volunteer organization, my "job" at the time, and a fellow member wasn't present when a vote was taken to spend some money specifically earmarked for a special project. To say she disagreed with the outcome of the vote is an understatement. She was so furious, she attempted to unseat me and called my integrity into question because I hadn't informed the entire organization of that impending vote. During that difficult season, I was reminded of Joseph's struggle, and I clung tightly to words David penned in Psalm 17. Turn there now and see how he craved justice and sought deliverance from his oppressors through his prayer.

**Record what stands out to you in Psalm 17:**

The Lord was faithful, (He *always* is!) and He delivered me through that storm and filled me with His presence, His power, and His peace. Whenever there is strife in the workplace, prayer is always the key! Remember, too, girls, the workplace is your mission field: whether at home or abroad. You may not be able to speak out loud about your faith, but you can sure live out loud and let your light shine SO brightly for Jesus, that in the midst of unrest in the workplace, you will find your rest in Jesus. My favorite reminder of that comes in Psalm 46:10 NLT.

**Write the first sentence of Psalm 46:10 here:**

Joseph longed for redemption, for recognition, and restoration. His story extends all the way through Genesis 47 (it's quite a tale - if you're not familiar with the story, set aside some time to read through it. It was even made into my family's all-time favorite musical, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*). He had to "be still" for quite a while! After over two years in prison, Joseph was forgotten after interpreting dreams for some of Pharaoh's officials, despite being promised a "get out of jail free" card. One night, Pharaoh himself had dreams that were keeping him awake. Joseph was brought before the king, provided an insightful interpretation, and was

instantly promoted to be Pharaoh's right hand man. After seven years of bountiful crops, famine hit the land, and Joseph's brothers find themselves in Pharaoh's court, pleading for food. After some dramatic exchanges, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, and peace and provisions go hand-in-hand, as forgiveness is extended. What's most admirable about Joseph is his attitude and perspective. He had endured a brutal boss, conniving coworkers, and himself working from jail! Yet Joseph acknowledged God's providence in Genesis 50:20.

**What does it say?**

**How does this encourage you?**

Girls, like Joseph, remember whose you are: you're the daughter of THE King, whose mercy, love, grace, and goodness are better than any paycheck you can receive, whose expectations and work ethic are just and true, and whose retirement plan is better than any IRA or 401K there is!

**Write out today's verse** on a notecard or post-it note and put it wherever you need this daily reminder: Colossians 3:23 says, "*Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.*" When you don't lose sight of who your boss really is, it can change your perspective 180 degrees!

Paul, Silas, and Timothy worked diligently to grow and encourage the believers in Thessalonica, which was their "workplace" for a season, never forgetting they were working for the Lord.

- **Probe** - Look up these additional verses about work:

**Deuteronomy 15:10**

**Psalms 90:17**

**Proverbs 14:23**

**Ecclesiastes 3:22,**

**Hebrews 6:10**

- **Practice** - Live out the "piece" of the "peace" the Lord puts before you. Pray for the Lord to bring to mind one or two people in the workplace you need to keep a servant's heart towards and to whom extra grace is *always* required. For the next week, every time you walk past their desk or office, place your hand on the doorframe or desk and pray for them and for your heart towards them to soften and for ways you can minister peace to them.



- **Ponder** - Journal Prompt: Write about a time when you felt God's peace in the midst of a chaotic work environment.

- **Promote** - Discussion question to consider: Recall a time when you had to deal with a difficult or challenging co-worker, and it didn't go so well. How did you handle it? Looking back, how would you have handled it differently, making sure to reflect Jesus?

The peace  
that comes  
from God  
will flow  
over us  
because it's  
deeply rooted  
and grounded  
in our faith.



**Praise** - "More Than You'll Ever Know" by Watermark

**Prayer** - Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that I can consider myself Your friend and thank You for surrounding me with the gift of friends. Help me see others through Your eyes, Jesus. Help me demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit, as You fill me with fruitfulness. Help me overlook others' shortcomings, and help me to see my own 'blind spots' so I can better minister to others. Help me extend grace and forgiveness when necessary, as well. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.



**Print** - Write the day's scrumptious Scripture in the back of the book if you'd like: Proverbs 17:17a

**Piece de Resistance** - "Recipe for Peace with Your Friends"

One of my favorite salad "recipes" I nickname the ABC Salad because it's as easy as, well, ABC! It is a spinach salad with apples, bacon, craisins, and cashews. Toss it with Brianna's Blush Wine Vinaigrette, and it's a crowd pleaser. This salad is a lot like a typical collection of friends: you have your sweet ones, your "salty" ones, and your nutty ones! Today we are going to look at Paul's example of who he has chosen as his closest compadres and how he kept peace among his friends.

Paul writes to the Thessalonian believers, along with Silas and Timothy. If you look back through the content of this letter, you may have noticed Paul uses the pronouns *we* and *us*, which reminds us that he was ministering with his fellow believers and friends. I love that Paul comes alongside these men, encouraging them, spurring them on to grow in their faith, and even promoting them when necessary. Paul knew the recipe for keeping and maintaining his friendship with Silas and Timothy, and the key ingredient was their common love of Jesus and dedication to spreading the gospel. Silas was a church leader (Acts 15:22), a prophet (Acts 15:32), a preacher (Acts 15:35), and he was invited by Paul to join in on his second missionary journey in Acts 15:40.

Read Acts 16:16-40 about their imprisonment.

**What did these two friends do while they were in jail?**

**What effect did their attitude and integrity have upon the jailer after an earthquake set them free?**

That's what I call true friendship! Neither blamed the other, we don't hear them complaining, and we don't read about any disagreements between the two of them. Instead, when faced with a situation of definite unrest, they were able to find peace in the midst of it, because, like Joseph when he was in a similar place, they looked to the Lord. They kept their eyes on Him, and not their situation. They didn't point fingers at each other, but pointed them up to the Lord. They prayed to God and sang praises to the heavens - and did you girls notice that the other prisoners were listening, too?

**Why do you think their friendship was so solid?**

Likewise, Paul found a similar friend in Timothy. The two met when Paul was traveling through Lystra (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy had a good reputation and others spoke highly of him, so Paul asked him to join in on spreading the gospel (Acts 16:2-3).

**How did Paul describe Timothy's faith in his letter to him?**

2 Timothy 1:5 calls it \_\_\_\_\_ faith. Paul gives Timothy the ultimate compliment in Philippians 2:19-22.

**What accolades does he give?**

The reason Paul had confidence and trusted in Timothy was because he was most concerned about what matters to Jesus. He wasn't interested in self-promotion, he wasn't worried about what other would say, he wasn't caught up in making a good impression; Timothy wanted to do all he could to further the gospel, and Paul recognized those godly qualities in Timothy. Hopefully the Lord is bringing to mind who He has placed in your life to be a mentor to, and hopefully He, likewise, will remind you of who has set an example for you to follow as you grow in your faith. Turn to Philippians 2:1-5, where Paul gives us insight as to how we are to love one another.

**Rewrite the first four questions with an affirmative answer.**

For example: YES! I am encouraged because I belong to Christ.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Paul reminds us whose we are and what our attitude should be: because we belong to God, because we have the love of Jesus, and because we are filled by the power of the Holy Spirit, our hearts should overflow with love, tenderness, and compassion. Paul gives us a checklist of some ingredients that will help us love our friends and all of the "one anothers" in our lives more fully and completely.

There are five elements that should go on our "to do" list as well as three warnings of what NOT to do. **Write them below.**

**Positive Ingredients:**

1. I will \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I will \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I will \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I will \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I will \_\_\_\_\_.

**Negative Ingredients NOT to cook with:**

1. I won't \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I won't \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I won't \_\_\_\_\_.

**Ultimately, we are to have the attitude of whom, according to verse 5?**

This, sweet sisters in Christ, is exactly the recipe you need to foster healthy friendships and relationships. Paul has a loving frame of reference throughout his time as mentor and friend to Silas and to Timothy. However, in Acts 15:36-41, we read of a time when Paul had to effectively separate from his friend and companion, Barnabas. Verse 39 recounts, "*Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated.*" You may find yourself in a season and a situation with a friend where things are not working out, and no amount of love, forgiveness, or grace is effective. Maybe this friend is caught up in unconfessed sin or they aren't ready to live an "out loud" faith, as in the example of John Mark from Acts 15.

You may have heard the saying, "friends for a reason, a season, or a lifetime." I find the ones I hang onto for a lifetime are the ones whose walk with Jesus most resembles my own and/or what I desire mine to reflect. Take a moment to think of a situation where time and a change in priorities led to a separation between you and a friend. Write her first name or initials here: \_\_\_\_\_. Spend a few minutes in prayer for her, interceding specifically that she would know and have a loving eternal relationship of Jesus Christ and that He would bring a blessing to her life.

Sometimes, however, the Lord will allow a Christian sister to remain in your life; maybe she is part of a circle of believing friends, and she may be a little more “difficult” and she may not “mesh well” with the group. What’s the recipe in *that* situation?

**Write the suggestion from Colossians 3:13**

A triple scoop of love, grace, and forgiveness is a delicious and winning combination. Girls, it is SO true! “...love covers a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:8.

Girls, our response should *not* be to become irritated, offended, hold a grudge, or worse, gossip about this “EGR” (extra-grace-required) friend. Instead, look for opportunities to build them up and encourage them in the faith, much like Paul has done with Silas and Timothy. And remember, too, your purpose on this earth is to emulate Jesus. As it says in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45, “...(Jesus) came not to be served but to serve others...” When I find myself in those situations, I often realize I have put unrealistic expectations on a friend, and I am forgetting to focus on what *I* can give to *her*, rather than what *she* can give to *me*.

Take a moment to reflect on an instance when you didn’t, perhaps, extend the love, grace, and forgiveness the Lord asks of you. **Summarize the event, and write one way you will handle a friend like this differently in the future:**

Now, girls, go and get cooking, and whip up some delicious friendships that love, serve, and honor the Lord!

- **Probe** - Look up these additional verses about friendship:

Proverbs 3:32

Proverbs 13:20

Proverbs 18:24

Proverbs 27:17

John 15:13

- **Practice** - Live out the “piece” of the “peace” the Lord puts before you:

Commit to love your EGR friend, \_\_\_\_\_, like Jesus!

**Write one thing you did today/this week that blessed her and honored God:**

- **Ponder** - Journal Prompt: Write about your best friend and what makes her so special. Take a moment and send her a quick text, encouraging her. Likewise, write about a person the Lord has in your life as a friend, or maybe just a close acquaintance, who is more difficult: an “EGR” person. Write out a prayer and a promise for how you will remind yourself to love on her and see her through the eyes of Jesus. Text her some words of encouragement, too.



- **Promote** - Discussion question to consider: Describe a time when you ministered to a “frenemy” and how the Lord changed your heart in the process.



**Praise** - "Fight for You" by Grayson Reed

**Prayer** - *Dear Heavenly Father, I come before you seeking peace in my marriage. I want to be the example of YOU, Jesus. Help me die to my own selfish needs, wants, and desires, and live for You, and You alone. Show me the places in my marriage where I have grown complacent. Give me the desire to love my husband and to truly see him through Your eyes and to genuinely appreciate the man You have created him to be. And if I'm single, Lord, thank You for being my "spouse." If it be your will, help me discover a man after your own heart who would welcome me into his. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.*



**Print** - Write the day's scrumptious Scripture in the back of the book if you'd like: Matthew 7:12, also known as "The Golden Rule."

**Piece de Resistance** - "Recipe for Peace in Marriage"

I am approaching my 30th year of marriage to Curt, and I'll never forget his introduction to my total lack of culinary skills. He'd been invited over for dinner, and I lived with my parents, so my mom did the cooking. He asked me what I was going to make for him, so I offered to whip up some nachos. Now don't forget: this was back in the days when you had to shred the cheese yourself. There was no packaged, shredded cheddar! Over the past three decades, however, I've mastered a number of things, including hand rolling his Italian grandmother's gnocchi and producing raviolis from scratch. How's THAT for growth?

If only marriage were as easy as following a recipe, and the results were as predictable! Marriage is a lot like a main dish: for those of us who are married, it's the "main course" and what a meal and a household centers around. Our husbands should hold the second position in our hearts and homes, after God, of course! But marriages are as widespread in variety as the number of meals you can make: the possibilities are endless. Acknowledging this, I will be the first to confess, I have NO idea what you're going through in your marriage, nor do I have any counseling degree or any "professional" opinion that I can offer. What I can simply do is to share with you a recipe for you to add to your repertoire. It might need some substitutions and some tweaking, but God's word never returns void (Isaiah 55:11 NKJ) and that is the only thing I can go by, because it's the only thing I know for sure!

So roll up your sleeves, and let's get cooking!

God's plan for marriage can be traced all the way back to Genesis.

**Please turn to Genesis 2:24 and write it out:**

And going back a few verses, according to **Genesis 2:18, God said:**

Since we were created as a helper, doesn't it stand to reason that we should be *helpful*? I find the source of much of the lack of peace in my household can be traced directly to me. There are many occasions that I am clearly NOT being the least bit beneficial to my husband, and it usually comes as a result of me wanting to do things MY way. Matthew 16:24 quickly convicted me!

**Read it and write down one area within your marriage that you insist on your "own way:"**

My list is a long one and includes such trivial things as where the "best" parking place is, to the "best" place to sit in the movie theater (I have my opinions, trust me!). But it also includes "bigger" issues, such as how to "best" parent each of our three children. What I had to realize is that I *don't* know best. Maybe I have different insight or a different opinion, but that doesn't make me "right" and my husband "wrong." It goes back to Philippians 2:3 that we looked at in the context of friendship, but it also applies in a marriage relationship.

**Write out Philippians 2:3:**

In humility, then, let us consider how we can be the kind of HELP to our husbands that the Lord would desire of us. For each letter in the acronym, look up the corresponding Bible verse and summarize what it says on the first line, and then *write out what this will look like if you were to live out this truth with your hubby:*

**H:** You are to **honor** him, according to 1 Peter 3:1-4.

**E:** You are to **enjoy** each other's company, according to Ecclesiastes 9:9

**L:** You are to serve him and **love** him with the love of Christ, according to Galatians 5:13  
(sidenote: this is mentioned to the Thessalonians three times in Paul's letters).

**P:** You are to **pray** for him, according to 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Love isn't easy. Every marriage that lasts will likely face trials, heartaches, temptation, and sin. But because of the redemption of Jesus, marriages can also experience grace, repentance, forgiveness, and growth. Marriage isn't a union of two perfect people (or even one!), but we serve a perfect, incomparable God. *"For with God nothing will be impossible!"* (Luke 1:37)

When your "marriage main dish" ends up burnt, be very careful where you go and what you do with that "failed attempt." The best thing to do is to consult another recipe book by another chef who has had professional experience: a Christian marriage counselor. He or she should provide biblical counsel to help you make adjustments to your marriage for it to prayerfully survive. Christian marriages are serious targets for Satan. He's on the attack and his number one spiritual tactic is division. This may fall into the category of being split and on different pages regarding children, friends, activities, finances, TV shows, movies, and even parking spaces. Don't listen to his whispers of "He isn't \_\_\_\_\_" or let "He won't let you \_\_\_\_\_" tickle your ears and become fodder for gossip with girlfriends. Don't let him convince you that "you deserve better" and "do what makes YOU happy." *These are lies of the enemy.*

Instead, recall the verses on love that may have very well been part of your wedding ceremony.

**Read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7.**

**Make a list of what love IS and what love DOES:**

**Now, make a list of what love IS NOT and DOES NOT do:**

**How do you "love well" according to that list?**

**Where do you need to improve?**

My favorite verse is how love doesn't keep track. So when my husband wants to know when the last time was that an infraction occurred, I reply with, "Love doesn't keep track, honey. I have no idea!"

Girls, let our desire and aim be to reflect the attributes of a "Proverbs 31" wife. (Proverbs 31:10-31)

**Write out the key qualities from verses 10-12:**

**Give an example of how you “bring your husband good”:**

**If you are a “righteous wife,” your “recipe” will yield what kind of result, according to Isaiah 32:17?**

Girls, your recipe for your “main dish” and your “main squeeze” will never be “perfect.” But it can be delicious if you follow God’s recipe, and be a big HELP to your husband!

- **Probe** - Look up these additional verses about marriage:

**Ecclesiastes:4:9 and 4:12**

**Mark 10:9**

**Ephesians 4:2-3 and 5:25-33**

- **Practice** - Live out the “piece” of the “peace” the Lord puts before you:

**How, specifically, will you pray for a change of perspective and a change of mindset with your husband?**



- **Ponder** - Write about the last time you truly put aside your own needs and wants and honored your husband by putting him and his needs first.

- **Promote** - If you were to give advice to a young married wife, what would you share?



**Praise** - "Even If" by MercyMe

**Prayer** - *Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the breath in my lungs and the life in my veins. In times when I'm not feeling well, lacking energy, fighting a cold or the flu, or facing a serious health crisis, I thank you that you are Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. Help me feel your peace in the midst of the chaos an unexpected diagnosis can bring. I trust You in and through it all. Thank you for your love and grace. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.*



**Print** - Write the day's scrumptious Scripture in the back of the book if you'd like: Psalm 23

**Piece de Resistance** - "Recipe for Peace in a Health Crisis"

Ok, girls, I recognize you might think it's odd that the recipe for dessert is analogous with health. But if you think about it, often when we are in the desert of despair due to a diagnosis (whether it's our own or it's someone close to us), it's the sweetness of the Lord that blesses us in and through the process, turning our *desert* into *dessert*, bringing peace in the process.

Turn to Isaiah 35:1-2. **What beauty did the Lord bring to the dry and weary land?**

(Truth: when I first read this verse, for a *split second*, I thought it was referring to Mount Caramel, and it made me think of dessert! Maybe it was just wishful thinking!)

**What encouragement do you read of in verses 3-4?**

Isaiah continues to write about healing and restoration in the remaining verses. I love what happens when the redeemed are crowned with "everlasting joy" (10a)

**And THEN what happens? Record the last sentence in verse 10:**

Like any good recipe, it always helps to know the “yield” and what the recipe will produce. Each and every time I’ve been faced with a personal health crisis, or something has happened to someone close to me, God always *“causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28 NLT)

Girls, and this is the most important “take away” for the day: this is true even when, and especially when, healing doesn’t happen on this side of heaven. You WILL be filled with joy and gladness and you WILL experience the *“peace of God that surpasses all understanding”* (Philippians 4:7 NKJ).

If you’ve personally ever experienced the outpouring of meals that come when you allow others to minister to you in any kind of “health situation” (even if it’s when you have a baby!), isn’t the desert often the favorite and most delicious part? I have a recipe for oatmeal chocolate chip cookie “stacks” that the kids always look forward to me making, because often they are accompanying a meal for someone in need. Sidenote: if/when you find yourself in a season where others are asking and wanting to bring you meals: say yes! You may feel foolish, perfectly capable, and not truly “in need.” However, if people are offering, humble yourself and say, “Yes, please!” You don’t ever want to stand in the way of someone blessing you, because they are certainly being blessed as much as, or more than you!

**Write about a time you were a blessing by bringing meals or help to someone else, and how YOU were blessed:**

**Now recall an instance where you were the recipient. How did you feel?**

Very recently, my son faced a scary health issue. He woke up one morning with muscle weakness in his legs and numbness in his feet (like they were permanently “asleep”). Although I initially dismissed it as “growing pains,” when your almost-six-foot-tall, 16 ½ year old son who *never* complains asks to go to the doctor, you listen! His condition worsened, and the numbness progressed to his fingertips, mouth, and torso. After a series of blood tests, a hospital transfer via ambulance, two MRIs, and a lumbar puncture, he was diagnosed with Guillain-Barre Syndrome. This is a virus that attacks the nervous system, and it was attacking my son. After spending six days in the hospital and undergoing five days of IV treatment with IGIV (each lasting 2.5 hours), he was released to go home and continue on a long journey back to regaining strength and health. We were incredibly blessed, because the prognosis was positive and the disease could have been SO much worse (requiring intubation if your lungs are affected or extensive physical therapy if you’re paralyzed). Still, just ask a formerly active teenage boy how he feels, and it still “sucks.” (Sorry - his words!)

Throughout this trial, I learned three valuable “ingredients” that helped me create my recipe for a “sweet dessert.”

**First**, is where I chose to **put** my burden. I’ve learned long ago, the hard way, of course, about what happens if I try to “handle it” all on my own and **put** it in my own hands: frustration, anxiety, worry, sleeplessness; you get the idea. We are to **put** it at the foot of the cross.

**Look up Matthew 11:28-30. What “health burden” do you need to lay down?**

**Second**, I wasn’t going to sit around, passively waiting for the seemingly endless parade of nurses, pediatricians, neurologists, respiratory therapists, child care specialists, and “room service” food delivery people to bring me updates. I was going to actively **PRAY!**

**What does James 5:16 NKJ say?**

There is SO much power in prayer. Even though we cannot see what God is orchestrating “behind the scenes,” we can know and trust our prayers are being *“accept(ed)... as incense offered to (the Lord) and (our) upraised hands as an evening offering.”* Psalm 141:2.

**Third**, we need to ask others to **participate**. James 5:14-15 invites you to call upon the “elders of the church” to pray, and I think this is a great reminder to include your church family. But God has also given you a platform to reach out on social media, and make your requests known! There’s no greater testimony and witness than to ask others to pray. The way your Christian friends respond and speak boldly about the healing and restorative power of God will speak loudly to those who will be sending you “good vibes.” (Yes. That made me laugh out loud, too!). And when healing *does* come, on this side of heaven or not, make sure to give God the glory, honor, and praise due to His name.

**What prayer of thanksgiving does Psalm 7:17 remind us to give?**

There are, of course, plenty of biblical accounts of how Jesus healed the blind, deaf, lame, weak, and even how He brought the dead to life. But sometimes God chooses not to heal, or delays the process. Paul himself had a physical ailment that God chose not to heal, and allowed it to keep him humble.

**Read about it in 2 Corinthians 12:6-10.**

**What “Aha!” moment does Paul have in verse 9 that we, too, need to remember?**

In our weakness and despair, when we come to the end of ourselves, that is the very place where God steps in and reminds us that *“...He is God, the one who rules over everything”* (Romans 9:5). This means we, obviously, are NOT!

When we feel like we are “suffering,” let’s not forget the ultimate example of Christ.

**Read Isaiah 53:4-5 and 1 Peter 2:24. How are we ultimately “healed?”**

Girls, don’t forget that healing is not “proof” of a person’s faith and/or of God’s love. Surely you can think of at least one person who had a strong, steadfast faith but, for reasons unknown to us, God chose not to bestow an earthly healing. It also helps to remember how it all “ends” in Revelation 21:4.

**Record this promise below:**

Oh what a day that will be!

- **Probe** - Look up these additional verses about health:

**Jeremiah 30:17a**

**Psalms 73:26**

**Isaiah 41:10**

**Isaiah 57:18-19**

**3 John 1:2**

- **Practice** - Live out the “piece” of the “peace” the Lord puts before you:

**Who needs a get well card, some flowers to cheer up a weary heart, or a warm meal to offer refreshment? Write out who you will bless and how here:**



- **Ponder** - Journal Prompt: Write out a time when God was faithful to deliver you through a health crisis.

- **Promote** - Discussion question to consider: Share about a time you had a “health crisis” and how the Lord brought blessing through this experience.



## Handwrite 2 Thessalonians

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