

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. We were not looking for praise from

people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. Instead, we were like young children among you, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom

and glorify you. May he strengthen you and hold you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his holy ones. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality. And to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. You should mind your own business and your own work, just as we told you. Brothers, do not want

to be informed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still

alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will

be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words. Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. For God did not appoint us

Homework - 1

Just a note: this lesson will probably take longer than other weeks. You may want to do it in 2 or 3 sittings, depending on how many times you have read 1 Thessalonians before Equip Group.

Remember, getting the big picture of the book is foundational to the rest of our study. Persevere!

Also keep in mind that it is easier for some people to see the big picture and for others to see the details. If this study seems difficult for you, the later detailed study may come more easily.

Finally, keep in mind that God wants to reveal Himself to us through His Word. It is not a secret mystery that only a few can figure out. Begin each segment by asking the Holy Spirit to calm your heart, clear your mind, and illuminate His Word so that He may lead you into truth. (John 16:13)

The first task in interpretation is to try to discover what the original, intended meaning of the text was. To do this we need to learn to read carefully and ask the right questions of the text—we need to observe.

- I. *Begin by sitting down and reading the book in one sitting. It really should only take you 20 minutes or so. Don't stop to look up any cross-references or ponder any questions. Just read it straight through. The more times you read it, the better grasp you will have on the book, its purpose, the logic used by the author, the tone, etc.*

After you finish, turn to the Summary Chart on page 6 at the end of this lesson and record your general impressions—style, content, tone, mood, etc. Is the author exhorting, comforting, describing, giving direction, persuading, warning? Are there any mood changes? If so, where?

(The purpose of your Summary Chart is to make a one-page summary of the important things you're learning about the book.)

- II. *Once again, read 1 Thessalonians in one sitting. But this time, try reading it in a different version or reading the passage aloud. Jot down anything that stands out to you.*
- III. *In order to really understand a book, we need to know the history of everyone involved. How did they meet? What was their time together like? How long were they together? What was their relationship like? This kind of information will give us insight to the things that are said in the book and why.*

To try to find the answers to these questions for 1 Thessalonians, we are going to go back to Acts where it all began.

Read Acts 16:1-18:1. Paul gets to Thessalonica in chapter 17, but what happens in 16 will give us a fuller picture of his time there.

a. Look at chapter 16.

List the places Paul went. (See the map in the appendix for a better visual idea of where Paul is going.)

Jot down any significant people you meet.

Record any events that seem important.

b. Look at chapter 17.

How did Paul end up in Thessalonica?

Who was there with him?

How long were they there?

How did people respond to their message?

Where did Paul go next? What did he do?

How did the Jews from Thessalonica get involved again?

Where did Paul go next? Summarize what happened there.

Where is Paul in 18:1? (This will come out when you read John Stott's introduction to the book.)

c. How would you summarize what has happened in these chapters with respect to 1 Thessalonians? How does this set up what Paul writes about it 1 Thessalonians?

IV. Once you've answered some of these questions for yourself, Bible scholar's Fee & Stuart talk about forming a "...tentative but informed reconstruction of the situation that the author is speaking to." They suggest that you consult a Bible dictionary, introduction to the New Testament, or introduction to a commentary to find out as much as possible about the city, its people, the time period, etc. This will help fill in the gaps of what you didn't learn from the text yourself, but don't miss out by going there first. And definitely don't read more than the introductions at this point!

I've included a copy of the "Introduction to the Book of 1 Thessalonians" from John Stott's study on Thessalonians entitled "*Living in the End Times.*" This resource can be found in the appendix to gain a better understanding on the historical context.

Is there any information that seems especially helpful to you in understanding the letter?

V. Obviously, this letter was written at a specific time to a specific group of people. However, it is still God's Word to us today.

As you read 1 Thessalonians, did you see any principles, ideas, or thoughts that jumped out to you? What does the Holy Spirit seem to be bringing to your attention?

- a. Think about giving the book of 1 Thessalonians a title. Based on what you've read so far and what seems to be driving Paul's writing? What title would you give it?
- b. What would you say is the key verse of 1 Thessalonians?
- c. Now take some time to read through the book again. This time, look for the answers to the 5W's and an H—just like in English 101. You can get a sense of what the author is addressing and why he is addressing, by doing things like looking at the relationship between the author and the recipient and looking for simple, general observations of the text. Learn to ask these questions of any text as you read to get a better sense of its context. As you answer them, jot down the verses where you found the information.

Who are the main characters?

Who is writing to whom?

What do you learn about them?

Author:

Recipients:

How would you describe their relationship? What had been their history?

What is the book about? What seem to be the main things the author talks about?

When does this take place?

Where does this happen?

Do you think the author spent time there?

Why is this being done or said?

Why was the letter written? What seems to be the author's goal?

What prompted the writing of the letter?

How did this happen?

Remember, these questions are things that you can ask of any text you read. They help to give you a sense of the book, who wrote it, to whom it was written, and what was going on at the time. This information is critical to really understanding the book and its original meaning—what was going on at the other end of the phone conversation.

Look at the Summary Chart and jot down any new information you've learned. As you continue reading the book over the semester, you may learn more about the author, recipients and background that help you gain a better understanding. Record that as well.

VII. Repeated Words & Phrases

Besides learning to ask questions about the author and recipients and using the 5 Ws and an H, another way to begin to get an overview of the book is to look for repeated words and phrases.

- a. Why do you think it would be helpful to look for repeated words? What do they tell you?

- b. What words/concepts do you see that are repeated in this letter?

Some people suggest marking the repeated words in your Bible in a certain way so that you can “see” them more clearly. You might mark one of the repeated words in blue, another in yellow, etc. Be creative!

- c. Go ahead and mark any repeated words/phrases that you find. Then, as you continue your study of 1 Thessalonians throughout the study and find any other repeated words, mark them as well.

Again, the purpose of asking these kinds of questions of the text is to help gain a better understanding of the message the author was trying to convey to his readers. As we do this, we will be able to interpret the text and then apply the text more accurately.

VIII. Author's Purpose

Now it's time to try to reconstruct what compelled Paul to write his letter to the Thessalonians. What was he responding to in the reader's lives and situation? What was going on in Paul's own life and ministry that he wanted to share with them? We are going to try to discern what Paul's purpose was in writing the letter. To do this we are going to try to synthesize the information we've gathered so far.

- a. What issues does Paul seem to be addressing?

- b. From what you can gather, how would you describe the condition of the church? What was going on in the church?

If we understand why Paul wrote the letter, we can better understand why he talks about the things he does. It is fascinating to note the author's word choices, etc. in light of the purpose. In some books the purpose is clearly stated [John 20:30-31]. In others, we must figure it out from the text itself.

- c. So, what do you think was Paul's purpose in writing this letter?

Our desire for you this semester is like Paul's for the Thessalonians. We want you to be encouraged about where the Lord has brought you so far and encouraged to excel still more in your journey of faith. We want you to seek to live a life that pleases God as his message continues to work in your life and ring forth from your life. We want you to live your life as one who is living in light of the coming of the Lord. We long that the Lord would use this semester in your life so that you would be able to “stand firm.”

- a. What do you think? Even now, can you see anything that the Lord might want to do in your life from spending time in 1 Thessalonians?

- b. Has anything you read this week struck a chord in your heart or mind?

- c. What are some of the principles of inductive Bible study that you have learned?

Summary Chart for 1 Thessalonians

First impressions

Author

Recipients

Key Word

Purpose

| | Title | Key Verse |
|--------------------|-------|-----------|
| 1 Thess. 1 | | |
| 1 Thess. 2:1-16 | | |
| 1 Thess. 2:17-3:11 | | |
| 1 Thess. 3:11-4:12 | | |
| 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11 | | |
| 1 Thess. 5:12-28 | | |