

RELEVANT • INSPIRED • PRACTICAL • LIFE CHANGING

WESLEY

ADULT TEACHER

.....
March-May 2026
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WESLEY
BIBLE CURRICULUM

.....
*The Hope of Holiness:
Paul's Letters to
the Thessalonians*

WESLEY

ADULT BIBLE STUDIES

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WELCOME TO THIS QUARTER OF THE WESLEY BIBLE CURRICULUM!

TO MY DEAR BELOVED

This quarter's Bible study opens for us Paul's first epistle to the church in Thessalonica. And once more we are allowed a glimpse, through God's inspired Word, into the heart and mind of the man who wrote the letter—the apostle Paul.

Warren Woolsey aptly introduced Paul, in his *Wesleyan Bible Commentary* on 1 and 2 Thessalonians, as the “model pastor . . . ready, simultaneously or by turns, to be to his spiritual children a father (1 Thess. 2:11), mother (2:7), and brother (1:4 and throughout)” (Wesleyan Publishing House, 1997). Just imagine if these same opening words could be written by a father to his son away at college: “Your mother, brother, sister, and I daily thank God for you and mention you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul's relationship could almost be characterized as doting. He was not just proud; he cared deeply for his spiritual children in Thessalonica.

As we dig deeper into this epistle's rich theology of Christ's second coming, or of his sanctifying work, we should never lose sight of the personal nature of all of these teachings. Paul wrote his thoughts, concerns, and profound truths to people he loved. It was important to him that they grasped these concepts, not because Paul needed to be vindicated, but because these doctrines were for their well-being as beloved believers.

The truth he explored and presented was out of concern for the interests of those he loved. That's because Paul knew that truth is not merely objective fact; it is personal. Jesus didn't teach, “These are the objective facts.” He taught, “I am the truth” in person.

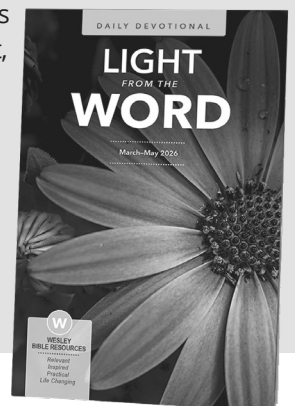
This is how we too must relate and share together in the truth of God's Word throughout this quarter. It is personal for you, yes; and it is also personal for those in your Sunday school fellowship. Let us pray that God's Spirit not only reveals doctrines to which we can assent, but also truths that we can take and apply personally and all together.

Wesleyan Publishing House Editorial Team

For more great Bible study resources visit
www.wesleyan.org/curriculum

BIBLE STUDY TIP

You will deepen your reflection on these lessons by reading *Light from the Word* each day throughout the week. This helpful, daily devotional follows the theme of each week's lesson with a relevant, practical message aimed at sharpening your spiritual life. You'll be immersed in these Scriptures and related passages every day.



HOW TO USE WESLEY BIBLE STUDIES TEACHER'S GUIDE



EVALUATE

Evaluate offers the opportunity for you to *review* the important truths from last week's lesson and discuss the most relevant applications members saw throughout the week.



ENGAGE

Engage includes suggested activities aimed at getting your class to think, discuss, react, or in some way *participate* in the lesson.



EXAMINE

Examine draws members into the study of Scripture. Here they will look closely at the scriptural content, coming to *know* what the Bible says. There may be more information than you have time to use in class, but it will be helpful for you as you prepare for the lesson.



EXPLORE

Explore guides members in *processing* the Bible content and grappling with its implications for their lives.



EXERCISE

Exercise helps you guide members to *take action* on the truth they have discovered.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

By reading for fifteen minutes each day, you can read every chapter of the Bible in one year. Begin anytime!

march

1. Luke 8–9
2. Luke 10–11
3. Luke 12–13
4. Luke 14–16
5. Luke 17–18
6. Luke 19–20
7. Luke 21–22
8. Luke 23–24
9. Numbers 1–2
10. Numbers 3–4
11. Numbers 5–6
12. Numbers 7–8
13. Numbers 9–11
14. Numbers 12–14
15. Numbers 15–17
16. Numbers 18–20
17. Numbers 21–23
18. Numbers 24–26
19. Numbers 27–30
20. Numbers 31–33
21. Numbers 34–36
22. John 1–3
23. John 4–5
24. John 6–7
25. John 8–9
26. John 10–11
27. John 12–13
28. John 14–17
29. John 18–19
30. John 20–21
31. Deuteronomy 1–2

april

1. Deuteronomy 3–4
2. Deuteronomy 5–7
3. Deuteronomy 8–11
4. Deuteronomy 12–15
5. Deuteronomy 16–19
6. Deuteronomy 20–23
7. Deuteronomy 24–27
8. Deuteronomy 28–29
9. Deuteronomy 30–31
10. Deuteronomy 32–34
11. Acts 1–3
12. Acts 4–6
13. Acts 7–8
14. Acts 9–10
15. Acts 11–13
16. Acts 14–16
17. Acts 17–19
18. Acts 20–22
19. Acts 23–25
20. Acts 26–28
21. Joshua 1–4
22. Joshua 5–7
23. Joshua 8–10
24. Joshua 11–14
25. Joshua 15–18
26. Joshua 19–21
27. Joshua 22–24
28. Romans 1–3
29. Romans 4–7
30. Romans 8–10

may

1. Romans 11–13
2. Romans 14–16
3. Judges 1–3
4. Judges 4–5
5. Judges 6–8
6. Judges 9–11
7. Judges 12–15
8. Judges 16–18
9. Judges 19–21
10. Ruth 1–4
11. 1 Corinthians 1–4
12. 1 Corinthians 5–9
13. 1 Corinthians 10–13
14. 1 Corinthians 14–16
15. 1 Samuel 1–3
16. 1 Samuel 4–7
17. 1 Samuel 8–10
18. 1 Samuel 11–13
19. 1 Samuel 14–15
20. 1 Samuel 16–17
21. 1 Samuel 18–20
22. 1 Samuel 21–24
23. 1 Samuel 25–27
24. 1 Samuel 28–31
25. 2 Corinthians 1–4
26. 2 Corinthians 5–8
27. 2 Corinthians 9–13
28. 2 Samuel 1–3
29. 2 Samuel 4–7
30. 2 Samuel 8–11
31. 2 Samuel 12–13

Due to the flow of the calendar, the March 1, 2026 lesson is included in the spring 2026 quarter but contains winter 2025–2026 content. Supplemental material for this lesson can be found in Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary, Volume 4, Unit 2, Lesson 2.

GOD HONORS
RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND FAITHFULNESS

KEY VERSE

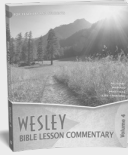
"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve."
—Jeremiah 17:10

SCRIPTURE

• Esther 6:1–10; 7:1–10; 10:3

LESSON FOCUS

God honors our efforts to cooperate with his plans for good.



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 4 • Unit 2 • Lesson 12
Activity: Humble Yourself to Be Exalted

Due to the flow of the calendar, the March 1, 2026 lesson is included in the spring 2026 quarter but contains winter 2026 content. Supplemental material for this lesson can be found in Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary, Volume 4, Unit 2, Lesson 12.



EVALUATE

Review the main truths from last week, and ask your class to share relevant applications they experienced.



ENGAGE

Opening

Review the story of Esther by briefly telling the story or by asking a series of questions about what your class has studied up to this point.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage Esther and Mordecai were minding their own business when thrust into the middle of Haman's plans to kill off the Jews. Little did they know they had been chosen by God to model righteousness and bring salvation of the Jews. Today's study brings us to the climax of the story, and we get to see God's mighty hand save the Jews and bring down Haman with his evil intentions. Because of their faithfulness to God, Esther and Mordecai became the instruments of salvation in furthering God's plans for his people.

INTRODUCTION

examine Today's focus is a study in irony. In Esther 5, Haman and his friends planned elaborately for the pole on which they would impale Mordecai (v. 14). Haman was so absorbed in plans for his own exaltation and Mordecai's execution that he was oblivious to possibilities of what could go wrong. He was so sure of his position that he misunderstood whom the king was speaking of when Xerxes planned to honor Mordecai. Haman was so puffed up with his own importance that it never occurred to him to question whether the king might think of anyone but him to honor. He merrily went off to build a taller-than-usual pole on which to impale Mordecai. Twenty-four hours later, it was Haman, however, who died on the very pole he had set up. This is a powerful lesson for us. When we become so absorbed in our own plans, we may miss God's larger purpose.

notes



ONE: Ask for volunteers to serve as role-playing actors as the class reads through the study Scriptures for this lesson.

6:1 *could not sleep.* His queen, Esther, was acting strangely. Perhaps his curiosity kept him awake.

6:1 *the chronicles.* On sleepless nights perhaps you have tried reading portions of the Old Testament that record the chronicles of various kings. You hoped certain passages would be boring enough to take your mind off your busy day, enabling you to return to sleep. Here we learn that even the kings themselves tried this trick. If this was Xerxes' goal, it did not work. The record of his reign reminded him of a great favor he had never repaid—Mordecai's action in reporting an imminent assassination attempt. The king's lack of courtesy roused him to a greater state of alertness. In any case, early morning appeared before the issue was resolved or the king returned to sleep.

6:3 *What honor and recognition has Mordecai received . . . ?* The king asked the question. His weary attendants undertook a bit of further research to learn the answer. "Nothing," they replied.

6:4 *Who is in the court?* In other words, he wanted someone to help him brainstorm ways to correct this mistake, the failure to repay Mordecai for his courageous act.

6:4 *Haman had just entered.* No one but God could engineer all the "coincidences" included in this book. Certainly, communicating this idea is the author's primary purpose for writing. Haman too had thoughts of Mordecai receiving what he deserved, but from a quite different perspective. Because Mordecai had refused to give Haman the honor the latter thought he deserved, Haman was planning not Mordecai's reward, but his execution.

6:6 *the man the king delights to honor.* Haman felt his ship had come in. The king had given him permission to destroy the Jews. Esther was holding banquets in his honor. With this question, he sensed the king too wanted to elevate him even further. In baseball, one out of three is pretty good; but in guessing royal motives, Haman's one of three would be his downfall. This book's author underlined the irony by repeating four times in four verses the phrase "the man the king delights to honor."

1 God uses nonbelievers to bring about his plans (Est. 6:1–10).

KJV

1 On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.
2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.
3 And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.
4 And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.
5 And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.
6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?
7 And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,
8 Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head:

NIV

1 That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him.
2 It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.
3 "What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked. "Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered.
4 The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him.
5 His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court." "Bring him in," the king ordered.
6 When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?"
7 So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor,
8 have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head."

continued

notes

KJV *continued*

9 And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

10 Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

NIV *continued*

9 Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!'"

10 "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended."

King Xerxes had insomnia. He couldn't think of anything to do in the middle of the night but to read his chronicles. These journals, or minutes, contained activities of the court. Scribes kept records of all the events, good and bad, that took place in the kingdom. Kings needed to keep a record of their enemies and friends. So, on a night when Xerxes couldn't sleep, he had some of these records read to him. One in particular recalled that Mordecai had saved Xerxes' life. Clearly, the king cared nothing for the one who saved his life once he was out of danger; he had done nothing to honor this hero, whom he had probably never met. Nor would he have known the connection between Mordecai and Esther. However, in a rare moment of appreciation, he planned to honor Mordecai in a big way.

Ironically, Haman showed up as Xerxes was in full gear, planning a celebration for Mordecai. One wonders if King Xerxes was taunting Haman, knowing Haman would think the honor was intended for himself. But it's clear that Haman, in his pride and overblown confidence, never considered that the king would want to honor anyone but him. In his eagerness and greed for exaltation, he planned an elaborate celebration for himself. In response to the king's question regarding how the king should honor an individual, he said, **Have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what**

6:9 *This is what is done.* In 6:8–9, Haman suggested all the ways he would like the king to treat himself—the ways a king could proclaim that one of his subjects was being knighted, or elevated to the Royal Hall of Fame, so to speak. Haman listed a royal robe, a royal crown, a royal horse, a royal attendant, and a royal proclamation.

6:10 *do just as you have suggested.* Can you imagine the speed with which Haman's smile turned upside down when he heard the king say "for Mordecai"? The one Haman hated, the one Haman wished to execute, for *him* the king commanded the royal treatment.



One

1. Calls for a personal response.
2. Calls for a personal response.

(Both are lived out in balance with each other.)



TWO: Guide your class to other examples of God using what was meant to destroy his people for their good. For example, Joseph's slavery in Egypt, or the Red Sea swallowing Pharaoh's army.

is done for the man the king delights to honor!" (vv. 8–9). Could he have been any more greedy? He was ensuring that the people saw him as equal to the king in pomp and power, he thought. And interestingly, the king didn't correct his wrong assumptions.

Proverbs tells us that pride precedes a fall, and Haman is a good example in Scripture. His pride and his lust for power so blinded him to the events and people around him that he practically skipped to his own death. His determination to be seen as equal to the king blinded him to any other possibility. But when one scoffs at God, that person can never expect to win.

What is even more fascinating in this passage is how God used Xerxes to honor his servant Mordecai. The king, certainly no believer in God, planned a lavish celebration to honor Mordecai and ultimately bring the downfall of Haman and the salvation of the Jews all at once. Several times in Scripture, we see God using an unbeliever to accomplish his purposes. God worked in and through Pharaoh in the battle with Moses. He used many others—even a donkey on at least one occasion—to accomplish his purposes and protect his chosen people. Here we see Haman unwittingly planning a wonderful celebration for his enemy, Mordecai. God can and will use whoever is at hand to do good for his kingdom.

ONE

explore

1. When has God used an unbeliever to bless you in some way?
2. What are your thoughts on the sovereignty of God and the free will of humanity?

God's plans may be unseen by us, but they are operating behind the scenes for our good.

2 God used Esther to save the Jews from death (Est. 7:1–10; 10:3).

KJV

7:1 So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

NIV

7:1 So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet,

continued

notes

KJV *continued*

2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

7 And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

NIV *continued*

2 and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

3 Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request.

4 For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king."

5 King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?"

6 Esther said, "An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

7 The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

8 Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

continued

7:2 up to half the kingdom. At this second banquet, the king again offered his generous promise to his beloved queen.

7:3 grant me my life. The king had just rewarded Mordecai for saving the king's life. As the king heard that someone had threatened the life of his beautiful queen, he was equally ready to move into action.

7:4 If we had merely. Note that even though Esther sensed the king's favor, she still spoke with the greatest care and diplomacy: "If I have found favor with you" (v. 3); "If we had merely been sold as . . . slaves," for example.

7:5 Who is he? Can you imagine the king's fury coming into full force? Obviously the one who dared to do such a thing was in big trouble! Haman must have known he had been checkmated.

7:7 left his wine. Only an eyewitness would have seen and remembered this detail. Only Esther could have been the source for much of this book's material.

7:7 went out into the palace garden. The king was caught in a hard place. He needed solitude to digest this news and decide how to proceed. On the one hand, he had promised (three times!) to do whatever the queen asked. But, for some reason the king thought valid, he had elevated Haman to a position second only to his own. Esther's accusation forced him to choose between his two favorite people.

7:7 Haman . . . stayed behind. If Haman had a choice between the two members of the royal couple with whom he could best plead for his life, he would not have chosen Esther. Likely the king had angrily told Haman to stay put while the king considered his response. Haman could have attacked the queen, but he knew that would seal his fate. His only hope was to beg Esther for mercy.

7:8 falling on the couch. Haman gave his begging all he could. He literally threw himself at Esther's mercy.

7:8 molest the queen. Haman's shameless action further enraged the king.

7:8 they covered Haman's face. Ancient Persian custom said that a criminal was not worthy to see the king. So, as Haman's guilt was determined, the court attendants quickly covered his face.

continued
7

7:9 Harbona. The king liked Haman. Evidently others of the king's retinue did not share his feelings toward the prime minister. Harbona knew of Haman's plot against Mordecai, even to the detail of the amazingly unnecessary height of the pole from which Haman intended to impale Mordecai. The height of the pole would have enabled all to see Mordecai pay for his misdeeds against Haman. He who had refused to honor Haman would be elevated to the height of shame.

7:9 Mordecai. This is the first mention of Mordecai in this chapter. It appears likely that Queen Esther did not know that the king had finally recognized her kinsman for his loyalty to Xerxes.

7:10 the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Earlier, King Darius had thrown Daniel's false accusers into the lions' den prepared for Daniel.

10:3 second in rank. Here we see yet another irony. The king not only placed Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai, but also put Mordecai in the place Haman had previously held—second in command over the entire empire.

KJV *continued*

9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

10:3 For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

NIV *continued*

9 Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman's house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king." The king said, "Impale him on it!"

10 So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

10:3 Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.

It is ironic that Esther never aspired to power yet was chosen by both Xerxes and God to occupy positions of earthly and heavenly power. Xerxes was magnetically drawn to Esther. Apart from her beauty, he was drawn to her inner radiance, which came from a godly character and pure heart. Xerxes realized none of this, but God did. It was God's plan that Xerxes chose Esther as his queen so she would have influence over him when enemies threatened the Jews.

Esther found herself in a position of power that was frightening in its potential consequences. The king could have dismissed her as quickly as he dismissed Vashti. Esther also knew her position was crucial for saving the Jews. She had prepared herself by fasting and praying and had patiently entertained the king with banquets. She had refused to answer his offer to give her anything up to half his kingdom. She proved to the king that she was not abusing her queenly position so he would be eager to listen when she finally made her request. Not only did he favor her, but by now he had come to realize that she was honest and not trying to get all she could from him.

Further, she told her story of betrayal with suspense. The king had no idea that Haman planned to destroy the Jews or that Esther was Jewish, so her request came as a complete surprise and he was eager to protect her.

While Haman plotted the extermination of the Jewish people, God was preparing the king to save and honor Esther and Mordecai.

Even if only out of the king's selfish interest, God was still able to use Xerxes to accomplish the deliverance of his people. And God used Esther as the mouthpiece to request their deliverance from the king, when perhaps she was the only one who could have persuaded him to do so. So, we see God using unbelievers and faithful believers alike on behalf of his chosen people. What does this tell us about the character of God and the endless creative lengths to which God will go to love and protect his own?

TWO

explore

1. What rewards should we expect from God during our time on earth?
2. How does God honor those who are faithful?

God will never betray or desert his people.

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

We see in this study a God of personal relationship. God does everything possible to protect and further relationships with his people. Those who respond in love and worship are often used as partners in God's work, furthering the kingdom on earth. A life lived in loving relationship with God is its own reward, but he may arrange other challenges and rewards for us. Our part is simply to be attentive and ready to obey as soon as we sense God speaking to us.

When was the last time you heard God speaking to you?

This week arrange to spend time with God as you would a loved one. Sit and simply enjoy his presence. You might hear him speaking to you today.



EXPLORE

Two

1. We expect none, but God does bless us again and again if we are observant and grateful.

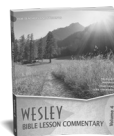
2. God brings good resolutions when godly choices are made. Peace and joy in the Lord are given even where no earthly resolution for good can be seen.



EXERCISE


Closing


Read Psalm 136 responsively, directing your class to repeat "His love endures forever" as you read the other parts. Feel free to add God's saving acts in Jesus and throughout church history to this summary of his protection of the Jewish people in the Old Testament.




Help your class connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Poetic Justice" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

notes

 **EVALUATE** Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.

 **ENGAGE** **Opening**
Present an overview of 1 Thessalonians. Include information about to whom, when, where, and why the letter was written. Challenge your class members to read the book through once a day this coming week. A few may choose to carry the reading through the entire study series.

 **EXAMINE** **Background**
The New Testament city of Thessalonica was an important seaport metropolis in the region of Macedonia. The city was located on the Aegean Sea. It was important because it was a junction for communication and commerce. It had a population of about 200 thousand people, and it was the capital of its province. This city was culturally diverse and a hub out of which people from the world went to many other places. It was a city much like the American cities of New Orleans, San Francisco, and New York. Certainly it was one of the most significant places in the Mediterranean world.

1 | MARCH 8

ALL OUT FOR GOD

KEY VERSE

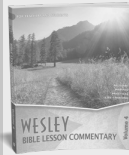
We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
—1 Thessalonians 1:3

SCRIPTURE

• 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

LESSON FOCUS

The fruit of victorious Christian living has its power in the foundation of faith, love, and hope.



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 4 • Unit 3 • Lesson 1
Activity: My Life So Far

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage First Thessalonians is our earliest record of a Christian community. Paul rejoiced over the good news, but showed genuine concern over their problems.

The apostle Paul gave his new converts to Christ an A+ for their faith, love, and sustained hope. He also commended them for genuine repentance and obedience.

The motivation of a true disciple of Jesus Christ is to be well-pleasing to God. Discipleship is based on devotion to Jesus Christ, not on adherence to a belief or creed. As St. Augustine said, "Jesus Christ is not valued at all until he is valued above all."

INTRODUCTION

examine If your doorbell were to ring and upon answering it you discovered a law enforcement officer before you with a warrant for your arrest, charging you with being a born-again believer in Christ, a Christian, would there be enough evidence in your life to convict you? The Christians at the Thessalonica church would have been convicted of such a charge.

The Thessalonian Christians were known for their work of faith, labor of love, and enduring hope—a trinity of positive characteristics modeling genuine conversion to Christ, exemplary lives, and aggressive propagation the Word of God.

10

notes

Faith, love, and hope are foundations of true holiness. Paul linked this triad of holy graces to obvious evidences of authentic conversion to Christ and service to God and his church. Let's take a look at these foundations of the holy life.

1 Thessalonian believers energized their church (1 Thess. 1:1–4).

KJV

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;
3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;
4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

NIV

1 Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.
2 We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.
3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you,

Rarely did the waters of evangelism run smoothly for the apostle Paul. Turbulence was his almost constant companion. At Thessalonica he began his ministry, as was his custom, in the Jewish synagogue. The response was overwhelming enough—including both Jews and Gentiles—to enrage those who didn't receive the good news. So menacing was the antagonism they stirred up against him that he was forced out of the city, making his way on to Berea and Athens.

Picture him in Athens. Night and day he thought of those new converts in Thessalonica—the fruit of only three weeks of ministry. He had left Silas and Timothy behind to instruct and encourage them. When later they joined him in Athens, he felt he should send Timothy back. When Timothy caught up with him a second time, he gave the report that became the occasion and background of 1 Thessalonians.

The year was AD 51 or 52. The place of writing was Corinth. The letter to the Thessalonians was the beginning of Paul's letter-writing ministry. The tone of this letter was one of profound and eager pastoral concern.

11



ONE: Discuss and list some traits of your congregation that Paul might praise in a letter to you.

1:1 *Silas and Timothy.* Silas is a prophet—one whose calling was to strengthen and encourage by means of exhortation (Acts 15:32). Like Paul, he was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). Timothy's father was Greek (16:1); his mother and grandmother were devout Jews (2 Tim. 1:5). He was recommended to Paul by Christians in his hometown, Lystra, and became one of Paul's most valued assistants (1 Tim. 1:1–2; 2 Tim. 1:2). He accompanied Paul on many journeys and occasionally acted as Paul's representative when Paul could not go. He also coauthored six Pauline epistles.

1:1 *church of the Thessalonians.* Paul and Silas founded the church in Thessalonica on their second missionary journey, immediately after being beaten, jailed, and miraculously released in Philippi (Acts 17; see also 1 Thess. 2:2 for Paul's reference to this experience). The Thessalonian church, to which Paul wrote one of his first letters, was born when "some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women" (Acts 17:4).

1:2 *always thank God for all of you.* Paul's love and gratitude for the Thessalonians was genuine, as his comments will verify over and over in this letter. He was not simply trying to disarm the people; his purpose was pastoral—to encourage as well as instruct.

1:3 *work . . . labor.* Two distinct concepts are indicated by Paul's choice of Greek words. Work (*ergon*) means to toil, as in effort or occupation. Labor (*kopos*) describes toil that drains strength. Labor is a product of love.

1:3 *faith . . . love . . . hope.* A familiar pattern, frequently used by Paul (1 Cor. 13); found also in Hebrews (6:10–12) and in Peter's writing (1 Peter 1:3, 8, 21–22).

1:4 *know.* Paul used forms of "know" fifteen times in his letters to the Thessalonians—frequently coupled with "brothers and sisters." The church is united the way families are—by shared experiences.

1:4 *he has chosen you.* God's most "chosen" is his Son. Thus he recognizes anyone who belongs to the Son as his chosen people, regardless of their origin (John 3:16). Those who are chosen, however, are identifiable by their lives (1 Thess. 1:3).

One

1. While Paul was lavish in his praise, he was not blind to the need for continuing progress. The Thessalonians' faith still needed to be perfected (1 Thess. 3:10), their love still needed to increase and overflow (3:12), and their hope needed to become more enlightened.

2. Election is an act of choosing. Election is a Christian doctrine that explains how God chooses to save sinners. Wesleyans believe that God, through Christ, elected to save all sinners. But we also believe each person has the power to choose. Humans can choose to accept or refuse the offer of salvation.

Some Christians believe God chooses to save only certain people. These people teach that those God chooses will be saved no matter what they do. They also believe that God elected certain people to be lost. Many in the Reformed tradition accept these views.

WORDS from Wesley

1 Thessalonians 1:3

The work of faith with heaven begun,
With Christ discover'd from above,
By just degrees is carried on,
By patient hope, and labouring love,
Nor ends the moment it begins,
Nor glory in an instant wins.
That work of faith the novice blind
Would fain, on fancy's horse, leap o'er,
A shorter way to Zion find,
And fight with sin—when sin's no more;
Labour, when of the prize possess'd,
And toil, when enter'd into rest.
That patience of unwearied hope
Fond nature would escape in vain,
To full-grown grace at once spring up,
Perfection in a moment gain;
Evade the fight, yet take the spoil,
The sweets of love, without the toil.
But O Thou patient mournful Man,
Thy life our better way we see,
And labouring hard through grief and pain,
Through toils and deaths we follow Thee,
Fight on, while day by day renew'd,
And strive, resisting unto blood.
We work, till Thou pronounce, "Well done!"
The incessant toils of love repeat,
And suffer till our final groan,
Till patience hath its work complete,
And faith its glorious end receives,
And love alone for ever lives. (vol. 13, 89–90)

(*The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley.*
Edited by D. D. G. Osborn. 13 vols. London:
Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1868.)

The greeting of the first two verses is followed by the gratitude of the next two. Paul's thankfulness was not merely a sentimental journey. He supported it by four specific qualities and marks of authentic Christian excellence, which appeared in the lives of Paul's converts in Thessalonica.

Paul remembered their **work produced by faith** (v. 3). Precisely what kind of work the apostle had in mind here we are not told. We know for sure Paul did not mean construction work in building a beautiful church structure. Witnessing for their Lord and carrying out deeds of compassion were certainly combined works of righteousness by the Thessalonians. They energized the church through a work of faith.

Works without faith are futile. Faith without works is a farce. Faith that inspires works is a living, saving force.

Paul remembered their **labor prompted by love** (v. 3). The Thessalonians had a love that was willing to toil for the church and serve Christ. Unlike slaves who labored under the constraints of being owned by driving masters, the Thessalonian believers joyfully labored and endured for love's sake. And, accordingly, they energized this young church through loving service.

Paul remembered their **endurance inspired by hope** (v. 3). Their willingness to cope with adverse circumstances and triumph over pressing troubles was motivated by their hope for Christ's second coming. In light of the prominence of this doctrine in the whole epistle, it almost certainly has this meaning here. Their trust was in the Christ who had come. Their hope was in the Christ who would return. This enduring hope energized them.

Paul also remembered that **God had chosen** (v. 4) them. In their choice of his Son as their Savior, God had chosen them. Paul saw in the lives of those believers positive proof that they were indeed God's chosen people. They were children in the family of God. So are we!

ONE

explore

1. In verse 3, Paul recognized three works of maturing faith. Comparing this verse with 1 Thessalonians 3:10, 12, and 4:13, explain in which specific areas these new converts needed to make progress.
2. Explain the doctrine of election, based on Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 1:4 and other related Scriptures in the New Testament. Why is this doctrine an important concept?

12

notes

The graces of faith, love, and hope glow with holy allure. These marks of spiritual excellence are foundational qualities to build a life of true holiness.

2 Thessalonian believers exemplified their Christ (1 Thess. 1:5–10).

KJV

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything.

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

NIV

5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, **9** for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

To be sure, words are used in the proclamation of the good news, but they have to be words charged with power—the transforming power of a risen Christ. The Thessalonians received the gospel through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul highlighted several effects of their conversion, namely their witness and influence for Christ. Then he put his finger on the primary effect: the radical change Christ and his gospel had wrought in them.

They had a powerful testimony. Paul told them they had become **imitators of Paul and of the Lord** (v. 6). They had no printed copy of the New Testament; it was still being written. Therefore, as they

13



TWO: Discuss and list things about your congregation that God might want other churches to imitate.

1:5 our gospel. Paul's gospel included the news that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . . [that he] might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life" (1 Tim. 1:15–16).

1:5 with words . . . with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. The effectiveness of Paul's preaching was due to a winning combination—his own deep commitment to doing God's will and the work of the Holy Spirit (also 2:2).

1:5 how we lived among you. Whether or not we are conscious of it, our lives either affirm or contradict our message.

1:6 imitators. Paul's life set a pattern, but only because Christ was his pattern.

1:6 severe suffering. Jason, who hosted Paul and Silas during their church-planting visit to Thessalonica, had been dragged (with others) before the city officials and forced to post bond (Acts 17:5–9). Paul could have well guessed that the church was suffering persecution. (The same agitators followed Paul and Silas to Berea. Paul almost always aroused disturbance and persecution by his aggressive sharing of the gospel.)

1:6 with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. Not only does the Holy Spirit empower the message and the messenger, he also enables the eager listener to understand and delight in the understanding.

1:7 you became a model. There is nothing more convincing than success.

1:8 rang out. The sound of a well-cast, true-pitched bell carries for miles.

1:9 turned . . . from idols. The people of first-century Europe were sold out to idol worship—as are people of the twenty-first century. Much, but not all, idol worship was grossly immoral; some participation in idol worship may have been considered by some people to be harmless. But Paul commended them for making a clean break with all idol worship.

continued

notes

1:10 *wait*. Those who wait for the second coming of Christ and look forward to the last resurrection need not be alarmed by present difficulties. Paul clearly understood that “to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

WORDS from Wesley

1 Thessalonians 1:5

With power—Piercing the very heart with a sense of sin, and deeply convincing you of your want of a Saviour, from guilt, misery, and eternal ruin, *with the Holy Ghost*—Bearing an outward testimony by miracles, to the truth of what we preached, and you felt: also by His descent through laying on of hands, *with much assurance*—Literally with full assurance, and much of it: the Spirit bearing witness by spreading the love of God abroad in your hearts, which is the highest testimony that can be given. And these signs, if not the miraculous gifts, always attend the preaching of the gospel, unless it be in vain; neither are the extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost ever wholly withheld, where the gospel is preached with power, and men are alive to God: *for your sake*—Seeking your advantage, not our own.

(*Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, by John Wesley, M.A. Fourth American Edition. New York: J. Soule and T. Mason, for the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, 1818.) Keep in mind that Wesley’s comments from his *Explanatory Notes* are based on the King James Version.



Two

1. Calls for a personal response. Possible answers include money, positions of authority, sports activities, materialism, or anything that prevents us from loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
2. Calls for a personal response.

followed Paul, they became more like Christ because Paul exemplified him to them.

They had a powerful transformation. A profound change had come over these Thessalonian converts. Negatively, they had **turned . . . from idols** (v. 9). Obviously this would have a different meaning for Jews who had embraced Christ. Yet the principle remains: in Christian conversion there is an inescapable renunciation. The old practices must be left behind and be replaced by new practices.

Positively, they surrendered themselves to the God who revealed himself in the saving death and resurrection of his Son. They had **turned to God . . . to serve the living and true God** (v. 9). Unlike their former idols, God lives. Unlike the shadowy system their former idols symbolized, God is genuine and true.

The Thessalonian believers were given hope for all their tomorrows—in time and beyond it. As they served Christ they were to **wait for his Son from heaven . . . who rescues us from the coming wrath** (v. 10). Here “wrath” is quite clearly associated with the time of the end.

The ten brief verses of this first section of Paul’s letter to the Thessalonian believers is a decisive description of how we can know we are really saved. W. O. Klopfenstein commented: “Salvation for the Thessalonian believer manifestly involved a radical change in belief and in conduct, a change which henceforth affected all of life and its relationships. Indeed there can be no real beginning in the Christian life without a genuine turning about known as repentance. These young believers broke with the ancestral past and with their pagan environment, a classic example for all time of the gospel’s power to transform both heredity and environment. Life henceforth was spent in the service of God and in anticipation of the return of Him through whom they were redeemed. He who is truly born of God will work while he watches and waits!” (*The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, 1965, 521).

TWO

explore

1. Reflecting on 1 Thessalonians 1:9, can you think of possible idols modern humankind may have to “turn from” to serve God supremely?
2. If new converts would imitate you as a Christian (1 Thess. 1:6), are you comfortable with your present example of attitudes, actions, and lifestyle?

14

notes

Those who are willing to exemplify the life of Christ are urgently needed in today's world. This requires a spirit of servanthood, an attitude of humility, and a willingness to always obey God. A truly holy life demands turning our hearts and lives wholly to Christ—as the Thessalonians did!

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

Christian author Anne Ortlund suggested, "Plan your life—if you don't, it will just happen."

Today's study provides us with a glimpse of a church community that purposefully planned to evidence their faith through good works, to labor from a heart of love, and to endure hardship with great hope. They shared the gospel, were totally abandoned to God, and served as a model to others.

Complete the following statements:

- I evidence my faith by . . .
- I exhibit my love by . . .
- I share my hope through . . .
- I share the gospel through . . .
- I have given up the following idols: . . .
- I know I am saved because . . .

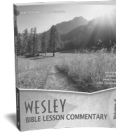
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EXERCISE

Closing

Take time to choose a class project that can be a "labor prompted by love." Set a time to do it and work out the details together.



Help your class connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Word Gets Around" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 4*.

notes

WESLEY

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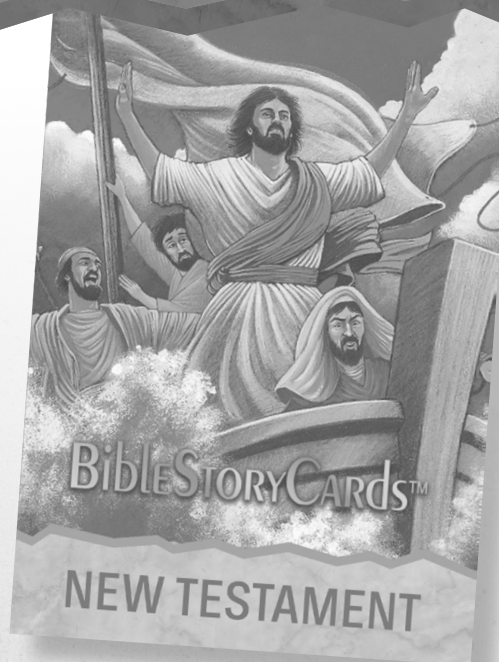
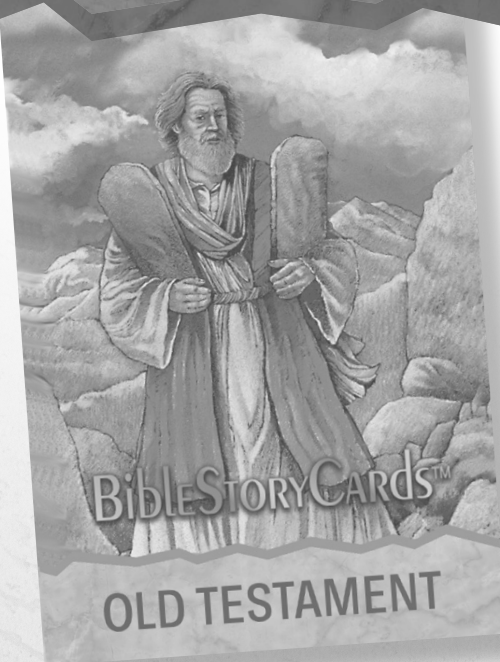
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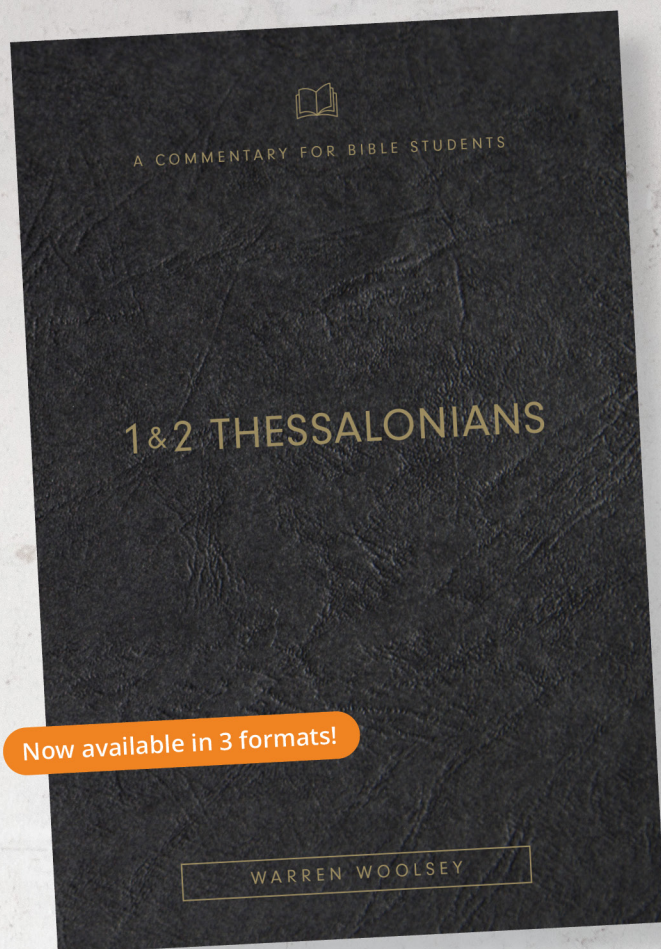
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