

our TUESDAY

A WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY FOR YOU, FOR HER, FOR US.

MAY 2017

1 thessalonians

work produced by faith
labor prompted by love
endurance inspired by hope



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introduction

Hey there,

I was thinking about you the other day because something happened with my kids that created a lightbulb moment for me. My two girls were running around our store as they often do because there's a great cartwheel alley by the checkout station that my oldest has put to good use as her personal gymnastics studio. The littlest was fulfilling her sisterly duty and aggravating the oldest mainly because she wanted to play with her. Fighting ensued and between tears and reprimands I found myself at eye level with both of them sternly telling them to 'LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER'. It had nothing to do with the cartwheels or the tears or who was right and who was wrong. It had everything to do with the fact that despite their feelings toward the other, at minimum, they need to have each other's back. To look out for one another.

Can I tell you that's the hope for Our Tuesday as well? Despite the fact we might not look alike, raise our kids alike or even believe every single thing exactly the same, I hope that we at least look out for one another. In tangible application that means respect, a listening ear and an understanding that when another sister messes up we chose to love them anyway. May we as women in this revolutionary time period of history choose to band together acknowledging differences yet resolving to not be defined by them.

The Thessalonians understood this concept of looking out for one another well in part because Paul, Silas and Timothy wouldn't let them forget it. In fact, there's a phrase that Paul used to encourage his congregation and describe this concept:

*work produced by faith
labor prompted by love
endurance inspired by hope*

I pray that as you read this compelling book that you too can feel the urgency from Paul and his cohorts. To love deeper, to understand wider and yes, to have a renewed desire to look out for your fellow sister even when tears and arguments are involved. It's helpful for me to remember that as believers we will never go wrong focusing on the life changing sacrifice of Jesus. Another good life skill is to learn to duck when cartwheels are happening around us.

Grace and Peace sisters,

Lanie Beth and the Our Tuesday Team

hello@ourtuesday.com - Shoot us an email! We'd love to hear from you.



a note from jeff & courtney

“When peace like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll. Whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.”

This song is a heart cry of love to a perfect savior. This song is praise and thanksgiving for his mercy. It is a song that can change your attitude, a song that can change your heart, a song that can change the way you live your life. As we were looking through the hymns and deciding what we felt was a necessity to sing over and sing with our children, “It is Well With my Soul” was at the very top of the list.

We first brought about this hymn at the breakfast table. We had been studying Psalm 23 with the children for a while so the imagery of peaceful waters was already present in their minds. A little research was required on their parts to find out what a “sea billow” was. We looked up images so we could have a visual representation to the first verse. Another fun way to really soak up the beauty in these words is get out the watercolors and ask your children to paint how they view a peaceful river and a raging sea. You could talk about how the way each painting makes them feel inside.

In every moment, and in every season of this life, in peace or in tribulation, He is good. That is what we want to take away from this song. That is what we want to teach our children. In every A+ and in every scraped up knee, Jesus is still good.

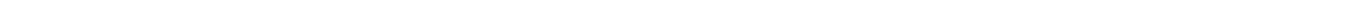
While sitting at the table, we asked each child to give us some examples of how Jesus is still good in good times and bad times. It is important for each child to be heard when they are sharing thoughts. The more they feel like they are being heard, they more open they will be when asked to share their thoughts and feelings in the future. There is no wrong answer when we ask them their thoughts on each hymn. If the conversation takes a turn, we gently steer it back in the right direction. After singing “It is Well With My Soul” a few times as a family, we decided that we would start asking our selves and asking each other ‘is it well with your soul?’ In good times and bad, is it well? It has been a real eye opener in my own heart and such a refresher in my spirit. In all things, He is good.

The story of Horatio G. Spafford (the writer of this Hymn) is so inspiring and I defi-

nitely recommend reading it with your family. I pray this little hymn study blesses you and your family and you continue into the other verses of this song. It is truly a gem.

-Jeff & Courtney

*We have included the hymn on the last page of the study. Please tear it out and use it to teach it to your family!



NO. 1

**Thanksgiving for the
Thessalonians' Faith**

| THANKSGIVING FOR THE THESSALONIANS' FAITH |

As we start today, please read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 and ask the Lord to bless your time in His word this morning. Each day, we are going to ask a few questions to help us get our brains working.

1. What is Paul trying to communicate?
2. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
3. Is the Lord teaching you anything through these verses?
4. If you were to memorize one verse from this excerpt, what would it be? Write it here.

I hope this crisp first page of 1 Thessalonians greets you well. From my point of view it's a blinking cursor beckoning me to fill the page. We are back into one of Paul's letters again. I hope we are both up for the challenge of this crazy-good book. Yep, he wrote a lot of them. 13 to be exact. (There's great dispute about whether Paul wrote Hebrews. However, it's such a hotly debated topic we are going to stick with the solid 13 books under his script for now.) Let's think of him as a passionate and often imprisoned pen pal. That's not weird at all, right?

The good news about the book of 1 Thessalonians is that Paul is not writing this from prison! He's not currently in trouble so that's a good start for his ministry but it also means that this book has a very different tone than Colossians. Since our April study was on Colossians, the prison epistle, we can now turn our attention to this prequel in Paul's theological reserve.

1 & 2 Thessalonians are widely viewed as the first chronological books of the New Testament. Did you know that!? I had no idea and I almost didn't believe them! These two short books were even written before the gospels! In fact, Mark and Luke were written later (around AD 60) after they traveled with Paul. While Matthew, Mark,

and Luke are known as synoptic gospels (they include many of the same stories in a similar sequence and in similar wording) the books were actually written long after Christ's death and resurrection and even after Paul's ministry really took off.

Let's dive in together to 1 Thessalonians.

One thing I am continually inspired to do though Paul's writings is to speak thankfulness aloud. Between giving thanks and his classic 'grace and peace' greetings, he's teaching me a new way to interact with people. A much needed reminder in this fast paced world we live in.

Read and write 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

Spoiler alert: What you just wrote is my favorite verse of the entire book.

work produced by faith, labor prompted by love and endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus

This is the kind of thing to treat like valuable gold. Rich words (translated though they may be) that break down heady theological ideas into bite sized morsels.

What do the following mean to you? Give real-life examples:

- work produced by faith:

- labor prompted by love:

- endurance inspired by hope:

After 3 of the best tag lines of the century, we find yet another treasure of scripture.

‘For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the holy spirit and with deep conviction.’ (v. 4-5a)

I like how Paul, when referencing his congregation, calls them ‘brothers loved by God’. Before we get up in arms about the verse only speaking to brothers, we’d be wise to remind ourselves about the historical church and how it functioned. Like it or not, this was the ancient way. I feel certain that were Paul to rewrite this in 2017 he’d add in sisters, too.

This is where things get interesting. I want you to look up two other scriptures, one New Testament and one Old Testament. The Isaiah 61 passage is a foretelling of Christ. The prophet Isaiah is speaking to the Israelites and telling them that Jesus (The Messiah) is coming. This prophesy is not only filled in Jesus coming to earth but Jesus himself references the same passage in Luke 4!

Look up Isaiah 61:1-3 and paraphrase here:

Look up Luke 4:16-19 and paraphrase here:

Stick with me here, the phrasing originated in Isaiah, was quoted by Jesus when reading from a scroll in the synagogue. It was then referenced by Paul when writing to the Thessalonians! Whew. Mind blown. The Bible is so rich and layered; it rewards the reader in countless ways.

**...and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
*Isaiah 61:3***

The gospel must be so clear so that people hear and understand. We cannot muddy the waters with our opinions and our thoughts on things. When Jesus quoted the Isaiah passage he was telling everyone that he was the anointed one! Paul is leaning on the fact that his readers would have heard about this happening. They were still alive! Yes, this was around 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection but it's safe to say that the Thessalonians would have known immediately what Paul was referencing.

How do you feel when you see threads of common language throughout the Bible? Does it excite you to dig deeper or does it feel even more confusing? Explain.

Our introduction to the Thessalonians' faith closes with two other key phrases I don't want you to miss:

(v.8) *'The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia- your faith has become known everywhere.'*

This congregation, small or large as they may have been, were known across their whole state for their faith. Think about your church today. Pray for your church body and it's leaders today. They are under so much weight and burden for their faith family. Try to reach out and speak that gratitude like Paul always does. May our faith ring out- much like a ripple in the water. It starts out small and piercing but goes out further and wider than the initial drop or ring. May our faith do the same. Spreading, reaching and growing with a little time and a little space.

Lord, thank you for our local church leaders and faith families. You have gifted and equipped them to serve us, and us them, in such a unique way. May they grow in work produced by faith, labor prompted by love and endurance inspired by hope. Amen.

NO. 2

Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

| PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THESSALONICA |

As we start today, please read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 and ask the Lord to bless your time in His word this morning.

1. What is Paul trying to communicate?
2. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
3. Is the Lord teaching you anything through these verses?
4. If you were to memorize one verse from this excerpt, what would it be? Write it here.

Way to get back at it, sister- proud of you! As chapter 2 opens up, let's remember that these words were originally written as a letter without chapters or subheadings. Just your standard run of the mill scroll that travels hundreds of miles on the back of a donkey and/or camel through windstorms and Middle Eastern weather elements to reach it's intended audience. Pretty basic, if you ask me.

It is important to note that Paul spent around 18 months in Greece and during his, Silas' and Timothy's time there, they confronted much opposition and hardship to their message. The first verse in chapter 2 reads, *'You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure'*. Right out of the gate, Paul is assuring the Thessalonians that his visit was not a disappointment. So we can only assume that there were people who, in fact, thought his visit was a failure. And a waste of time. Perhaps Paul had a different way of gauging his time than others did.

One of the biggest issues Paul and Timothy faced in this Macedonian region was that the government was terrorizing the homes that they were staying in and quite frankly, the hosts that so willingly allowed the travelers to stay with them. In one instance, their host, Jason, was drug out into the streets and beaten simply because Paul

and Silas were staying with him.

Read what happened to Jason in Acts 17:4-6

Thankfully everyone was ok after this incident of poorly used force. Paul, Silas and Timothy snuck through the gates of the city that night and found reprieve in another location. As tough as they were, the gospel renegades couldn't bear the thought of their gracious congregation being brutalized on their behalf. The renegade lawmakers knew that imprisoning the evangelists would do little to stop communication so they hurt their people instead.

Have you ever experienced a time where you needed to leave a setting so that your loved ones wouldn't be affected? Explain.

Nine times in 1 Thessalonians, Paul writes, 'You know'. He is referencing his character here. Calling on the impression he surely left on this Grecian congregation. Paul may as well be telling them, You know that I had good character. You know that I had pure motives for our time together. You know that we faced opposition and yet we pressed on! You know!

1 Thessalonians 2:11 *'For you know that we dealt with each of you as a Father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and glory.'*

How do you react when you see our heavenly Father referenced as an earthly Father? Does that make it easier or harder for you to understand God's motives?

Paul and his band of merry men, as brisk and intense as they were, knew one thing: Love, not personal greed, compels witness more than anything else. This is his reasoning for bringing up Fatherly relation-

ship as well as imagery of a mother caring for an infant. He's pulling all of his experiences to paint a picture of their true heart for Thessalonica. You can almost hear the desperation in his voice- '*We loved you so much we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us*' (1 Thess. 2:8).

Since this congregation in particular meant so much to these three men, the following verses carry extra weight.

Please read and summarize 1 Thessalonians 2: 14-16.

In my NIV, verse 16 uses the phrase, '*In this way they (the Jewish religious leaders) always heap their sins to the limit.*'

What do you think that means?

I don't know about you, but when I think about sin, I'm doing my best to do as little heaping as possible! Sounds pretty terrible if you ask me. Based on my research, this 'heaping of sins' has to do with the implication that the religious leaders wanted to be full of guilt at all times. If the Jewish leaders kept a tally of their sins then, in a twisted way, they could feel good about the sacrifices they made on a daily basis. That they somehow played a part in their own forgiveness. It was also a backward way of Jewish leadership communicating that the Gentiles had no way to atone for their sins. However, Paul was preaching this new covenant and sacrifice. Jesus was the final sacrifice once and for all. There was no longer a need for animal sacrifices or their high priest for that matter. But the Jewish religious leaders simply could not come to grips with this tradition-shattering view.

Jesus made a way! For me, for you, for us and for them. In his great grace we no longer have to feel shame at our pasts. Forgiveness is

offered through the one and only crucified Christ. When we refuse to accept Christ's forgiveness that he so freely offers, we are in turn waiting for something better and more complete to come along. Break free of shame, my friend. No one really wants to feel exposed but it's the road that leads to truth. Break free and grasp what is in front of you this very minute. Exposed as you may feel in that moment, salvation is calling and his name is Christ Jesus.

Although our current time period brings with it its own challenges, we are blessed in many ways to live on this side of knowledge. We know and understand so much more about the Bible and we have more of the story at our disposal. On our phones and hand held Bibles and computers. It's pretty amazing, really.

Since we do know and understand more about forgiveness through God's word, let's read a few verses that encapsulate this idea a little better.

Psalm 103:12-13

Colossians 2:13

Acts 10:43

It's safe to wrap up today's lesson by concluding that the Lord's love for us is without measure. He raises up people who are obedient to his word to complete his good works. Faithful people. Strong believers. The ones who have childlike faith and trust their loving Father. Even if their earthly father was a dark shadow of what is to come. God loves us. He truly does. In the way you need and want. In the right way. In the true way. You can trust him and his word today.

On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.

1 Thessalonians 2:4-5

But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

Psalm 103:17-18

NO. 3

**Paul's Longing to
See the Thessalonians**

| PAUL'S LONGING TO SEE THE THESSALONIANS |

As we start today, please read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5 and ask the Lord to bless your time in His word this morning.

1. What is Paul trying to communicate?
2. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
3. Is the Lord teaching you anything through these verses?
4. If you were to memorize one verse from this excerpt, what would it be? Write it here.

Alright, so here we are! You've made it to day 3! I feel like you've earned that 4th cup of coffee for the day- wait, is that just me looking for justification? Probably so. Either way, I'm gonna need some more caffeine because we are wrapping up the end of 1 Thessalonians 2 and jumping straight into Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 wraps up in a rather sweet way. Paul is feeling all the feels about his beloved church. He is some kind of homesick, writing this letter. I'm learning more about Paul's time with this people group and realizing that this was part of his glory days. He seemingly got into a groove and was received well for the most part. He came to Thessalonica after a rough go at things in Phillipi and Macedonia where he had been beaten and illegally imprisoned.

Since we are several days into our new journey with Paul I think it's best if we appropriately introduce his people. Yes, they are his friends but they are also much more than that. Paul had a vetting process to his comrades and we know from Colossians that there were some gospel heavyweights that didn't impress him in the beginning. (Col. 4:10)

While Paul eventually came around to Mark and a few other co-laborers like him, he most certainly had his favorites: Timothy and Silas. Later, Barnabas and Titus make the short list as well but we'll save that story for another day.

Read about Silas in Acts 15:32-33 and Acts 16:35-37. Summarize what we know about him here:

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7

Read about Timothy in Acts 16: 1-3 and 2 Timothy 1:3-7 and summarize what we know about him here:

When chapter 3 opens up, Paul is continuing to talk about how much he loved his time in Thessalonica and how after they left in such a hurry to go to Athens, he and Silas sent Timothy back to check on everyone. Paul was a minister but he very much took on the pastoral role in this situation. He tended to his people and cared for them to make sure they were not too shaken up but the events that took place. Namely the event with Jason we referenced on Day 2. After that scary incident, our three protagonists took to the streets in the middle of the night. Less out of fear for their own skin and more so that they could protect the congregation.

Please read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Paul references the Tempter in this passage which is pretty revolutionary. Remember, the gospels aren't written yet....or not completed and circulated at least. Paul would have heard the story of Jesus' temptation from someone that was close to him. We know that Paul clearly had experienced the devil in his ministry efforts. The fact that Paul speaks directly of the Tempter and is worried for his people concerning whether the Tempter would render their efforts useless is important theological ground to cover.

Due to all of the events, and their hasty exit, Paul sent Timothy back to see about their faith. The interesting thing to me, is that the way Paul references the faith of this congregation is as though it is a living, breathing thing. That must be fed and kept safe and warm. He was so desperate to find out if the nearly 2 years of ministry in Thessalonica had been all for naught and the only measuring tool he was using was their faith.

If your faith was measured today, on a scale of 1-10, where would you land?

There is so much happening in the spiritual realm that is unseen and unnoticed. However, just because we aren't aware of it doesn't mean it's not happening or real. Paul doesn't want all of his crew's efforts to be wasted. Because he knows that no matter how good of a job they did ministering, that the Tempter can snatch that ground and progress away from them if they were not careful.

We must fight for the day to day victories of faith and love and kindness. We must fight for the ground we've covered. Stand tall and don't be unaware of his schemes. (2 Cor. 2:11). We must be women who know who we are but more than that, know who we serve!

We serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who came and is coming again! Don't be threatened by the tempter to give up your dirt. That relationship that is finally coming back toward one another- guard it! That prodigal child that is finally coming around once in awhile. That job, you know the one with the boss. There is nothing passive about this. Paul knew it better than anyone. This life is an active one and we must be ready to fight for our lives!

Please close in prayer. Ask the Lord to show you places your ground is weak that you might be on guard all the better.

NO. 4

**Timothy's
Encouraging Report**

| TIMOTHY'S ENCOURAGING REPORT |

As we start today, please read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13 and ask the Lord to bless your time in His word this morning.

1. What is Paul trying to communicate?
2. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
3. Is the Lord teaching you anything through these verses?
4. If you were to memorize one verse from this excerpt, what would it be? Write it here.

Good news! Timothy is back in Corinth from his visit to check on the Thessalonians. I know we were all waiting with baited breath to see if he made it back in one piece. His report was terribly encouraging to Paul. The Thessalonians indeed had 'pleasant memories' of the time that Paul, Silas and Timothy spent with them. *'Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith'* (1 Thessalonians 3:7)

Have you ever had someone that you've mentored? Officially or unofficially. Someone that was younger in your field of work or perhaps in the faith that you were able to guide through a season of life. Describe what that relationship looked like.

Please read and write 1 Thessalonians 3:8 here:

I have had the privilege of meeting with younger girls for several years now. Let's be honest, even when I felt like I had little to offer them, I did my best to be a sounding board and friend. Sometimes these meetings went well. Sometimes I royally messed up. Maybe I tried too hard to 'mentor' them or in some cases, I realized after the fact that I didn't try hard enough. It can be tough to look back and grade our performance as a guiding voice, yet it's necessary. Paul was a great one to emulate. He had Silas who was an encourager to him and then he almost always had a younger man with him. Someone that showed promise of talent but mostly of heart. And those people simply did life with Paul. And he taught and shepherded them along the way but it was, seemingly, not forced or manipulated.

The important thing to note was that Paul didn't disciple men and then find ministry to do with them as an activity. Paul was most surely going to work hard at what the Lord had called him to do. The younger folks simply went along with him. This was Paul's lifestyle, not simply something to check off his to-do list.

Is there a difference between discipleship and mentorship? Explain.

Think of someone who is your sidekick friend, like Silas, and someone you can help guide and lead in the faith, like Timothy. Stop and thank the Lord for them today. Ask him to give you words of encouragement for both types of friends today.

At the beginning of 3:8, Paul writes, *'For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.'* The news of the Thessalonian faith being strong was like water to a thirsty soul. (Prov. 25:25) The reference to 'really living' would suggest that the suspense of not knowing how the Thessalonians were holding up would have been the death of Paul. Hearing news from Timothy's trip would have meant a deep exhale and probably a good night's sleep. I can practically see Paul pacing the floor on the day of Timothy's arrival. He grabs his shoulders and hugs him the minute he walks through the door only

to stand back and pelt him with 1,000 questions leaving Timothy to answer them as if it were a rapid fire test in school. (Sidenote: I'm pretty sure this is how my husband would describe my reaction when he gets home most days. #adultconversationforthewin) The intensity was palpable and they, no doubt, celebrated that night with a good meal and shared memories of their friends across the Via Engatia.

Please read and write 1 Thessalonians 3:10 here:

Upon first reading this verse, I admittedly scanned over it without much thought. You see, in my mind, this is Paul- of course he prayed for the Thessalonians earnestly night and day. That makes sense, right? Paul is one of the heroes of the New Testament so he would have the bandwidth to pray every morning and night for the same group of people. Immediately, my justification correlation kicks in: But this is 2017. I have a family and work and dinner to cook and laundry to pretend like I stay on top of...there's no time for prayer to that standard. The Lord knows anyway, right?

Of course the Lord knows, but that's not why we pray, is it? We don't pray to inform the Lord. We pray to petition, build relationship, work through our feelings and intercess for others. It is in the praying for others that we step outside of ourselves. We cannot expect to clearly communicate the gospel if we are not constantly praying to look outside of ourselves. Yes, there is a time to pray for ourselves but the bulk of our prayer life should be on behalf of others. What's the best way to get over jealousy? Pray for them. What's the best way to figure out how to serve others more effectively? Pray for doors of service to open. What's the best way to figure out and/or fulfill our calling? Pray for vision and ask the Lord about the needs of his people and what's the best way that you can meet that need given your sets of talents and gifting.

Intercession is a powerful tool. The beauty is that it serves others and we get to reap the benefits of a budding relationship with our Lord and Savior. Win. Win. Win.

**To Timothy,
my dear son:
Grace, mercy and peace
from God the
Father and
Christ Jesus
our Lord.
*2 Timothy 1:2***

The last two verses in this chapter are my favorite. This is where Paul steps into the role of minister and he blesses his people. He speaks (or writes rather) a blessing that is twofold:

1. (v. 12) *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other, and everyone else just as ours does for you.*

- Their faith has remained steady but Paul urges them to press in. Lean deeper into service and respect for one another as well as your community. We cannot stop the outpouring of love simply because we don't know people. When we operate out of Godly love, it fills us to the point of overflowing into the community and city around us. The Lord can fill us with love for others! Praise God!

2. (v. 13) *May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*

- The result of love in this life is blamelessness in the next. Although 'blameless' sounds like a tricky word, it's actually the same root word that is in 2:19- glory. The verse could also read this way: May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be holy and glory in the presence of our God and Father. To be blameless is to glory and boast in Christ alone.

Instead of feeling overwhelmed at the level of excellence to which the Bible calls us to, I pray today that you can rest in the fact that He who calls you to it will complete it (5:24). And, he who is the way to eternal life also made the way. He equips us with tools, gifting, people, ministers and church bodies to fulfill all of our callings.

Lean into the promises of God. They are strong enough to catch you, no matter how hard you fall.

***For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.
How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we
have in the presence of our God because of you?***

1 Thessalonians 3:8-9

NO. 5

The Call to Sanctification

| THE CALL TO SANCTIFICATION |

As we start today, please read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 and ask the Lord to bless your time in His word this morning.

1. What is Paul trying to communicate?
2. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
3. Is the Lord teaching you anything through these verses?
4. If you were to memorize one verse from this excerpt, what would it be? Write it here.

Hi! I hope you're hanging in there with me as we journey through this book. Don't worry, today should be light- we're only talking about sexual impurity, resisting the spirit and winning the respect of outsiders in our daily life. NBD...ALL THIS IN ONLY 12 VERSES. We better cut the small talk and get going, sister.

First word in Chapter 4 is 'Finally'. Yet Paul continues to write for another two chapters. I get the sense that our man Paul is like the public speaker who tells you several times, 'In conclusion' or 'This is the last thing I'm going to say...' knowing full well that is not the last thing they are going to say. Might as well settle on in for another 30 minutes. Thinking about Paul in these interpretive ways, could totally be inaccurate, no one knows for sure- but it certainly helps to remind me that he was a real person with his own communication style and personality quirks.

Please read and write 1 Thessalonians 4:1 here:

How you interpret this can say vast amounts about your personality. When you read this, do you focus on the first half or the second half? Explain.

Optimists would focus on the first half but pessimists or realists would focus on the second half. In case you're curious, I almost always fall into the latter. On a good day, I'm hopefully realistic, on a bad day I'm the first to throw in my towel and claim that the sky is falling. Reading this I focus on the fact that Paul is urging these people to 'live as though they are pleasing God more and more'. No doubt this felt like a daunting task but the good news is that there are some very practical steps in the next few verses.

Verse 3 opens a heavy section of content, there's no denying it. But I love the way Paul sets it up: *'It is God's will that you should be sanctified'*. It's as if he's clarifying, what we are about to talk through is meaty- but I want you to know that it's God's will that you be dedicated to God. He wants us for himself! At the end of the day, all of the boundaries and warning from the Lord are all for our good- even if we don't like them or understand them. We will save ourselves a lot of heartache if we can simply come to that conclusion early in our walk with the Lord. Or if we are already farther along on this journey, there's always time to change course. Even before the last leg of the trip.

Have you ever been on a journey to a life destination only to wake up one day and realize you don't like where you're headed? What did that feel like? How did you change course?

Paul reminds the Thessalonians, and us in 2017, to avoid sexual immorality. To learn to control our bodies in a way that is holy and honorable. And to not give way to passionate lust. Here's the deal, we know that sex is intended to flourish and be a beautiful thing inside the boundaries and safety of marriage. The use of the word lust here would imply that the sexual desires he's referencing are not within marriage and have no way of being satiated in a God honoring way.

Please write 4:8 here:

God gives us his holy spirit to guide us in our lives and to help us resist sin. To choose sin is to resist God's spirit. The use of the word 'reject' in v.8 would mean that we once had truth in our hands and then chose to set it down to pick something else up. In this case, Paul doesn't want us to put down the warnings of the holy spirit to pick up sexual immorality.

Can you give an example of a situation like this in the world today?

Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

1 Thessalonians 4:9

Verse 9 applauds this congregation on the love it shows to one another because they have been taught by God and put their lesson to action. In fact, Paul says that they are known for their love throughout Macedonia. Think of it as if we lived in the city of Atlanta and our love was known throughout all of Georgia. This is the encouragement he's giving them: The whole state knows about your love! That's amazing, now take it up another level. I know you can do it because of the authority that Jesus Christ has given you!

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, these last two verses are my favorite. Also, I should probably stop saying that but I just can't help it! Let's break them down together.

There are 4 basic instructions in these two verses. I'll write them here and ask that after each phrase, you write what the practical application in your life would look like.

1. Make it your ambition (or goal) to lead a quiet life -

2. Mind your own business and work with your hands -

3. Do the above so that your daily life might win the respect of outsiders -

4. This is so that you won't be dependent on others -

Here's what is wild to me- Paul was telling people in ancient Greece to live a quiet life. There was literally zero technology, no phones or internet. The most advanced form of communicating was through letter writing. And yet, they still needed to be reminded to lead a quiet life. Goodness knows if they needed it then we most certainly could use reminding. There are platforms out in this world that will beckon us to come and take hold with the lure of being seen. May we as believers and as women, see through the scheme. To be looked at and watched are not the same as being seen. Valued. Loved for who you are. That happens before a gracious and loving God that calls us his children and daughters. And, Lord willing, that happens in your home with your people. Even the best friends in the world cannot satiate that deep desire for our own fame. That is flesh rising up and if we don't wage war against it we will become victims to our own desires, no matter where the ambition is centered.

May your *daily life* win the respect of outsiders. Not the high moments and the vacations and the big things. The beautiful mundane. This is your life. And this is my life. Let's don't waste it.

NO. 6

The Comfort of Christ's Coming

| THE COMFORT OF CHRIST'S COMING |

As we start today, please read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and ask the Lord to bless your time in His word this morning.

1. What is Paul trying to communicate?
2. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
3. Is the Lord teaching you anything through these verses?
4. If you were to memorize one verse from this excerpt, what would it be? Write it here.

Ok, ladies. Let's have an honest moment together. Take my hand. Deep breaths. Alright. This is a hard section of scripture to both understand and to digest. The following 6 verses cover huge theological milestones. We are going to address the issues and cover them to the extent that would benefit the majority of our people. If you'd like to dig deeper, then by all means, give me a heads up and I'll email you a reading list. If this sort of thing makes your eyes glaze over, here's the good news- I'll never know if you go on and turn this page right over to lesson 7.

Let's start with the issue of sleep in the Bible. In this passage, Paul doesn't want us to be ignorant (see also: uninformed) about those who fall 'sleep'. In reference to believers, death is akin to sleep or sleeping. Sleep is used to describe the bodies of the departed Christians, never their spirits or souls. Did you know that even our english word 'cemetery' comes from a Greek word meaning 'sleeping place'? Is your mind blown right now? Because mine certainly was! Paul probably used the familiar analogy because every night, we act out this symbol of death and every morning is like a resurrection. This makes sense to us! It was honestly a brilliant way to describe the resting bodies of believers.

The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

John 11:44

He wanted Christians to be able to grieve the loss of their loved ones with hope. Paul never asks us not to grieve those we have lost—only to grieve as though we have hope that we will see them again in heaven. We know that Jesus grieved the dead and wept at a friend's grave even though he knew he would raise him from the dead a few minutes later (John 11). Proper grief is a worthy and honorable exercise; something of which we should never try to rob people.

Read John 11:35-44. Summarize here, please.

His very next sentence is a statement about what Paul, Silas and Timothy are declaring to believe: *'We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in him. (4:14)'*

Verse 15-18 are what many scholars consider to be personal revelation from the holy spirit. Obviously, Paul is not dead yet so there is no way for him to know the following information imparted in these 3 verses other than a revelation from the Lord.

Please write 4:15 here:

Who will be taken up to heaven first? The alive or the sleeping? Based on the first person language, Paul earnestly believed that he and the Thessalonians would still be alive upon Jesus' second coming. To this point, he addresses those 'sleeping' more than he does those still alive because there was a thick understanding that those alive were working as hard as they could possibly work to be ready for the return of Jesus.

To direct the following verses, we are going to lean upon a scholar named William McDonald. McDonald writes that in connection with Christ's coming there is a sound to hear, a sight to see, a miracle to feel, a meeting to enjoy, and a comfort to experience.

Please read 4:16-17 and describe what you find in the passage:

A sound to hear:

A sight to see:

A miracle to feel:

A meeting to enjoy:

A comfort to experience:

Without muddying the waters, there are so many views of the rapture out there. Just take a look online and it can make your head spin. Premillennial. Amillennial. Postmillennial. Maybe you're just a millennial that's trying to figure out eschatology? (See what I did there?) Let's decide together, today, that we are going to focus on the fact that Jesus died and rose again and that he loves his people enough to send his son to die on the cross. The timeline of eschatological theories might be a hobby but we are wise to give it the time it deserves and then look up to face those around us.

King Jesus is coming back with a loud command, the voice of the archangel and the command of the trumpet. We will be caught up in the clouds to meet with the Lord in the air and will live forever with him. Encourage one another with these words (1 Thes. 4:18). Let's be ready.

Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

NO. 7

**Children of the
Day of Redemption**

| CHILDREN OF THE DAY OF REDEMPTION |

As we start today, please read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and ask the Lord to bless your time in His word this morning.

1. What is Paul trying to communicate?
2. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
3. Is the Lord teaching you anything through these verses?
4. If you were to memorize one verse from this excerpt, what would it be? Write it here.

We are winding down to the end of Paul's first letter to his beloved congregation. It's probably getting late into the night as he's writing and his hand is no doubt tired from dipping his quill into the ink continuously for hours on end. He's labored to form eloquent words that show his deep seated love and affection as well as the urgency he feels inside his soul. No doubt, he's read and reread his words to ensure he conveyed his love, appreciation and admonishment with the correct tone.

If he's said it once, he's said it a thousand times- Christ is coming back! Be on notice! In 5:3, Paul is reading what all of us are thinking thousands of years after his original letter. 'While people are saying, 'Peace and Safety,' destruction will come suddenly.' He likens this groaning of the earth to labor pains- there is no escape. I'd be remiss if I didn't actually relate this to labor pains I've personally experienced. They are very much inescapable and uncontrollable. As a woman in labor, there is no doubt in your mind what is about to happen and there is nothing else that has your attention. That's what's happening in our world today. The earth is groaning with labor pains for our Savior to come back. The wars and destruction are all spikes on a screen that shows that things are progressively leading up to the return of Christ. If it feels like there are many proverbial spikes currently happening it's because there are. Much like actual labor,

the contractions intensify and become closer and closer together until they eventually produce a child.

Perhaps if you've not labored yourself but have seen another woman experience this, it still resonates. I believe that the language was extremely intentional and even through multiple translations, it rings true today. There are ways to numb out pain from these labor pains, but the inevitable will still take place. The earth as we know it will, at an undisclosed time, produce our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.
Luke 12:40

Please read and paraphrase Luke 12:38-40 here:

Here's another interesting fact: The verbiage used to depict a thief is the same wording that is used to describe Satan in John 10:10. Write that verse here, please.

Christ is coming like a thief because the hour will be unknown but also because he will come through the air. This world that we live on is Satan's playground. So when Christ comes back again to save us, it will be a show of power and disgust for Satan's rule. He will come to bring those sleeping with him as well as the believers that are alive, remember yesterday? And it will all happen quicker than a snap of a finger!

The Lord calls us sons and daughters of the light and of the day. *Children of the Day of redemption!* (Eph. 5:17-18) Paul goes on to talk through what happens in the day vs. the night. (5:5-7) Verse 8 is the beginning of Paul putting together the concept of the armor of God that he expounds upon in his letter to the Ephesians.

Please read Eph. 6:13-18. As believers we should put on:

Belt:

Breastplate:

Feet fitted:

Shield:

Helmet:

Sword:

What is the tangible application of this analogy? How can we apply this to our life today?

'For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.' (1 Thes. 5:9-10)

There is a really important phrase in the above passage I want to point out before we close today's lesson out. The first 9 words let us know that the Lord didn't appoint us to suffer wrath- this would be explained by stating that we were not made for God's judgement without him first making a way for forgiveness. The Lord's plans are beyond what we can understand but rest in the fact that you and I were not created to simply live and then suffer under the judgement of the Lord. We were created by him and for him (Col 1:16) and he sent his son Jesus to atone for our sins- to cover our debt. It can be easy to look at the suffering around us, or perhaps in our own home, and feel lost or forgotten.

You are not forgotten. (Is. 49:16-17)

Your suffering is not in vain. (Rom. 8:28)

The Lord hears your prayers. (1 John 5:14)

Christ died on the cross so that whether our earthly bodies pass before his return or we are still alive and kicking when he comes back that we might live forever with him. Paul is encouraging his congregation in these words!

Be reminded that this life will not and cannot last forever. Our time is brief and our message is heavy. Be alert! Know that the labor pains happening around the world symbolize something greater than what the news anchors can communicate.

We will end with Paul's exact words: *'Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing'* (1 Thes. 5:11) I know you as a reader are working hard to love those around you and serve in your own places of ministry. I want to encourage you to continue to raise up leaders around you. Speak into people's lives that they too might feel the urgency behind this gospel message. Keep up the good work and let's continue to push back the darkness in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

***But since we belong to the day, let us be sober,
putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the
hope of salvation as a helmet.
1 Thessalonians 5:8***

NO. 8

Final Instructions

| FINAL INSTRUCTIONS |

As we start today, please read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 and ask the Lord to bless your time in His word this morning.

1. What is Paul trying to communicate
2. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
3. Is the Lord teaching you anything through these verses?
4. If you were to memorize one verse from this excerpt, what would it be? Write it here.

Crack those knuckles and do a few hamstring stretches, we are in the homestretch of our wonderfully rich letter to one of the first thriving congregations. To think that Paul established this group of believers, some of which were Jewish by heritage yet most were Gentile, is still impressive to me. Think of how hard it is to disciple and shepherd the members in our churches now. And we have technology!

Fill in the blank:

'Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who _____
_____, who _____ and
who _____ you. Hold them in the highest regard
because of their work. Live in peace with each other.'

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

There is one word in verse 12 that we don't use as much in our culture but I think it's mainly because we don't see it enacted properly very often.

Admonish: verb (used with object)

1. to caution, advise, or counsel against something.
2. to reprove or scold, especially in a mild and good-willed manner:
The teacher admonished him about excessive noise.

3. to urge to a duty; remind:
to admonish them about their obligations.

It can be difficult to open ourselves up to criticism. Sometimes we are too sensitive and others, the people delivering the critiques, are not gentle enough. To admonish someone has a ‘good-willed manner’ about it. It’s along the same lines as a parent asking their children to find their shoes and then when the child can’t find their shoes the parent has a long talk about being responsible with their belongings. This never happens at my house so I’m just speaking from the hip here. My point is, Paul is not asking us to respect people who are mean spirited in their opinions of us. (I think the cool-kids are calling them ‘Haters’ these days.) Two very different things.

Guard your heart against those who mean you harm but remain open to those who love you and can spur you toward your goal. And our goal is always Jesus.

In verses 14-18 there are 9 quick instructions, please write them down in the margin. Write the one that resonates with you the most right here:

There’s a reason this last lesson is titled ‘Final Instructions’ because Paul is trying to land the plane on this letter to his friends and co-laborers.

‘Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good.’ (5:19-21)

The fire that he references above in v.19 is Pentecost’s fire. Spirit and fire are often used in correlation with one another. Although John the Baptist was the first one to associate spirit with fire (Luke 3:16). The Fire in v.19 is referencing the visible fire at Pentecost (Acts 2).

Read and summarize Acts 2:1-13.

Perhaps you've heard this phrase before: 'Don't quench the spirit.' Paul's wording here means a similar thing. We don't have the power to put out the spirit or enliven the flame in anyone else's heart. But we are responsible for our own response to the spirit in our lives.

Paul uses similar terminology in 2 Timothy 1:6-7. Please write it here.

Did one phrase stick out to you? For me it's 'fan into flame'. The fire was already in Timothy, Paul was simply urging him to tend to the flame. Fan it! Give it more life! This is the analogy for tending to the spirit inside us. The holy spirit is a gift from the Lord, we can either do our best to suffocate the flame or we can fan it to grow larger and larger.

'Test everything. Hold on to the good.' (5:21)

Since we are friends now, I want to bring you in close and tell you something. You are smart and intelligent. Gifted, capable and fraught with imperfect moments that when handled correctly can simply point you to the One who created you. But you must know where your allegiances lie. Verse 21 is a prime example of why this is so important.

My guess is that, if you've been in church for any length of time, someone has told you something to do. Or given you advice (wanted or unwanted) that you had to decide how to process. Verse 21 is proof and backbone to why we should always be on guard and take very seriously the people we allow to speak into our lives. When Paul says to 'Test everything', he is referencing the testing of the Spirit. The Lord is giving us a free pass to essentially not internalize anything until we've held it up against the word of God to check for correctness.

He wants us to censor what we internalize. Check and see that what

is spoken over you is straight from the word of God. If it is then by all means, take it to heart and make necessary changes in your everyday pattern. Hold on to the good. However, if someone speaks negativity over you, abuse over you, condemnation over you- from the word of the Lord, do not hold onto that in your heart! Allow Christ to rule as gatekeeper of your life. The more sensitive we become to the spirit, the easier it is to discern and test. May we ask the Lord to keep us sensitive to his spirit.

If you remember in Colossians 1:2 we talked though *Grace and Peace*. Grace is a greek word that represents the undeserved sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This was Paul's way of using language that Greeks and Gentiles would understand. And Peace references the Jewish tradition of Shalom- Peace over you. Yet in classic Pauline form, he uses Grace and Peace together. Before we can get to peace, we must first understand the sacrifice and the life giving beauty of undeserved merit. Only then can we move onto the Peace of God. Pretty astounding, right!?

'May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.' (1 Thesalonians 5:23-24)

The God of peace sanctifies us daily. He speaks a better word over our lives when we let him. Our spirit, soul and body can be kept blameless/righteous when we align ourselves with his covenant.

Verse 24 is a rally cry, please write it in all capital letters here:

This is one of those verses that you can write on an index card or on your bathroom mirror. Somewhere. Anywhere. Everywhere. Remind yourself that the faithful one calls you and he can complete this work in you! Stand firm and rooted in that promise today. No matter what he says, or she says or what the acceptance letter tells you. If he calls you to it, the Lord will complete his good work in you. End of story.

**And everyone
who calls
on the name
of the Lord
will be saved.
*Acts 2:21***

Lastly, Paul charges the Thessalonians to read his letter to all of the people in the assemblage. He's not shy about the importance of his words because he knows that they were a revelation from the Lord. What if we all took that view? What if, you and I, got out of the way of the message? If we identified with the word of the Lord so deeply that we knew how to find ourselves in him yet we didn't have to guard or protect anything. His words speak for themselves. There's so much freedom in relinquishing control. It's not something that comes easy or natural, at least for me, but it's so rewarding. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. (Matt. 11:29-30) The burden of the cross speaks a fresh covenant, one that we are invited into but have no business trying to control. This premise is grace and peace.

'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. (5:28)

May God himself, the God of peace (v. 23) and The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 28) be with you as go about your daily life. He hears, sees and acts. We can trust him with our lives.

***Do not quench the Spirit.
Do not treat prophecies with contempt
but test them all; hold on to what is good...
1 Thessalonians 5:19-21***

It Is Well with My Soul

PSALM 146:1
Horatio G. Spafford, 1873

VILLE DU HAVRE
Philip P. Bliss, 1876

1. When peace, like a riv - er, at - tend - eth my way, When sor - rows like sea bil - lows roll;
2. Though Sa - tan should buf - fet, though tri - als should come, Let this blest as - sur - ance con - trol,
3. My sin, oh, the bliss of this glo - ri - ous thought! My sin, not in part but the whole,
4. For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live: If Jor - dan a - bove me shall roll,
5. But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy com - ing we wait, The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
6. And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;

What - ev - er my lot, Thou has taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul.
That Christ has re - gard - ed my help - less es - tate, And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life, Thou wilt whis - per Thy peace to my soul.
Oh, trump of the an - gel! Oh, voice of the Lord! Bless - ed hope, bless - ed rest of my soul!
The trump shall re - sound, and the Lord shall de - scend, E - ven so, it is well with my soul.

Refrain

It is well, _____ with my soul, _____ It is well, it is well, with my soul.
It is well, _____ It is well, _____ with my soul, _____

MAY 2017 // 1 thessalonians