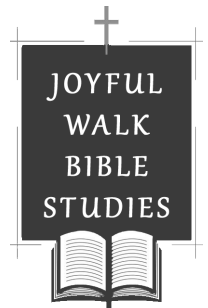


PERSPECTIVE

Insights from 1 and 2 Thessalonians

MELANIE NEWTON



Contents

INTRODUCTION

Using This Study Guide.....	1
Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians (NIV 2011)	3
Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians (NIV 2011)	6

LESSONS

1: Overview of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.....	11
2: Perspective on the Gospel	21
3: Perspective on Being a Servant-Leader	31
4: Perspective on Suffering.....	41
5: Perspective on Faithful Endurance	51
6: Perspective on Sex and Love.....	63
7: Perspective on Death and Beyond.....	77
8: Perspective on Living in the Light	89
9: Perspective on God’s Justice	101
10: Perspective on the Great Tribulation	113
11: Perspective on Life in the Waiting	127
Extra Lesson: The Rest of the Story.....	139

Using This Study Guide

This study guide consists of 11 lessons covering two of Paul’s letters—1 and 2 Thessalonians. If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passage covered by the lesson and try to do the “Day One Study” of the lesson.

THE BASIC STUDY

Each lesson includes core questions covering the passage narrative. These core questions will take you through the process of inductive Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. It is the best approach for doing Bible Study. The process is more easily understood in the context of answering these questions:

- What does the Bible say? (*Observation: what’s in the text*)
- What does it mean? (*Interpretation: the author’s intended meaning*)
- What application can you make? (*Application: making it personal to your life today*) Some questions introduced with the words “Gain perspective” also fit the application category.

STUDY ENHANCEMENTS

Study Aids: To aid in proper interpretation and application of the study, additional study aids are located where appropriate in the lesson:

- Historical Insights
- Scriptural Insights
- From the Greek (definitions of Greek words)
- Focus on the Meaning
- Think About It (thoughtful reflection)
- Dependent Living (relying on Christ)

Other useful study tools: Use online tools or apps (blueletterbible.org or “Blue Letter Bible app” is especially helpful) to find *cross references* (verses with similar content to what you are studying) and meanings of the *original Greek words or phrases* used (usually called “interlinear”). You can also look at any verse in *various Bible translations* to help with understanding what it is saying.

PODCASTS

Find podcasts coordinating with these lessons at melanienewton.com/podcasts and most other podcast channels. Follow along with the “Podcast Listener Guides” for each lesson.

NEW TESTAMENT SUMMARY

The New Testament opens with the births of John and Jesus. About 30 years later, John challenged the Jews to indicate their repentance (turning from sin and toward God) by submitting to water baptism—a familiar Old Testament practice used for repentance as well as when a Gentile converted to Judaism (to be washed clean of idolatry).

Jesus, God's incarnate Son, publicly showed the world what God is like and taught His perfect ways for 3 – 3½ years. After preparing 12 disciples to continue Christ's earthly work, He died voluntarily on a cross for mankind's sin, rose from the dead, and returned to heaven. The account of His earthly life is recorded in 4 books known as the Gospels (the biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John named after the compiler of each account).

After Jesus' return to heaven, the followers of Christ were then empowered by the Holy Spirit and spread God's salvation message among the Jews, a number of whom believed in Christ. The apostle Paul and others carried the good news to the Gentiles during 3 missionary journeys (much of this recorded in the book of Acts). Paul wrote 13 New Testament letters to churches & individuals (Romans through Philemon). The section in our Bible from Hebrews to Jude contains 8 additional letters penned by five men, including two apostles (Peter and John) and two of Jesus' half-brothers (James and Jude). The author of Hebrews is unknown. The apostle John also recorded Revelation, which summarizes God's final program for the world. The Bible ends as it began—with a new, sinless creation.

DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDELINES

1. **Attend consistently** whether your lesson is done or not. You'll learn from the other women, and they want to get to know you.
2. **Set aside time** to work through the study questions. The goal of Bible study is to **get to know** Jesus. He will change your life.
3. **Share your insights** from your personal study time. As you spend time in the Bible, Jesus will teach you truth through His Spirit inside you.
4. **Respect each other's insights.** Listen thoughtfully. Encourage each other as you interact. Refrain from dominating the discussion if you have a tendency to be talkative. 😊
5. **Celebrate our unity** in Christ. Avoid bringing up controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues, and denominational differences.
6. **Maintain confidentiality.** Remember that anything shared during the group time is not to leave the **group** (unless permission is granted by the one sharing).
7. **Pray for one another** as sisters in Christ.
8. **Get to know the women** in your group. Please do not use your small group members for solicitation purposes for home businesses, though.

Enjoy your Joyful Walk Bible Study!

Recommended: As an introduction to the whole study, listen to the podcast “The Need for Perspective” at melanienewton.com/podcasts.

The Need for Perspective

THE STORY

- When the apostle Paul wrote the letters that we know as 1 and 2 Thessalonians, he had been a Christian for more than 15 years. From the beginning, Jesus told Paul that he was to go to those who were called Gentiles (non-Jews) and preach the gospel to them.
- On his second missionary journey, God directed their movements first to northern Greece to the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica. Then, they went to southern Greece to the cities of Athens and Corinth. It is from Corinth that Paul wrote two letters back to the Thessalonians.

GAIN PERSPECTIVE

Perspective is an objective assessment of any situation, giving all aspects their comparative importance.

- We all need perspective to help us successfully navigate through the challenges of daily life.
- Gaining perspective is like sharpening your focus with a lens. Sharpening your focus not only clears up blurry vision, but it can also help you to see something at a distance that you were not able to see. You get a glimpse of where you are heading. Paul’s letters to the Thessalonian Christians helped them gain perspective about many issues of life.
- From the moment Paul entered their city, the Thessalonians knew him as being well-educated and a tent-making craftsman. They knew that he was determined, bold, convinced of the truth of Christ, and very committed to Jesus’ calling on his life. He was a gifted teacher and loved God’s people almost as much as he loved God Himself. Paul reminded them of that in 1 Thessalonians to help sharpen their focus on who he was and what kind of relationship he had with them. They could trust his words.
- There were no cell phones or email for Paul. He depended upon letters and eyewitness accounts for his information about all the churches. You’ll see evidence of this in the Thessalonian letters.
- Biblical perspective on life is God’s perspective on life. Paul helped the Thessalonians gain God’s perspective on the persecution they were suffering at the hands of their neighbors. When you sharpen your focus to gain perspective, you get...

...the ability to see God's presence, to perceive God's power, and to focus on God's plan in spite of the obstacles. (Chuck Swindoll, *Insight for Today devotional*, May 19, 2017)

- Biblical perspective on life helps you grow in confidence because you learn that your self-worth is not derived from any human being but from God.
- Biblical perspective about death and the future gives you hope and assurance of your future with Christ in eternity. You will not fear death as those who have no hope.
- Knowing the future hope gives you God's perspective on life that you need in your world today. For now, you must live and work in this world. Paul's letters to the Thessalonians have a lot to say about that.
- When you gain the biblical perspective on who God is, what it means to live your life to please Him, and what He has planned for your future, you get a security in Him that allows you to rest and enjoy life today. And, you will be able to serve God with greater enthusiasm and freedom to impact your world for Him.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with His perspective on life in the present and in the future. Then, live securely in Him during this time of waiting.

1: Overview of 1 and 2 Thessalonians

DAY ONE STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

The ABCs of 1 and 2 Thessalonians—Author, Background, and Context

Like any book you read, it always helps to know a bit about the author, the background setting for the story (i.e., past, present, future), and where the book fits into a series (that's the context). The same is true of Bible books.

AUTHOR

Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter written to the church of the Thessalonians. Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, was born in Tarsus, a major Roman city on the coast of southeast Asia Minor. Tarsus was the center for the tent-making industry. Paul was trained in that craft as his occupation (his primary paying profession). As a Jewish Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin, Paul was educated at the feet of Gamaliel, a well-respected rabbi of the day. Paul was an ardent persecutor of the early church until his life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ.

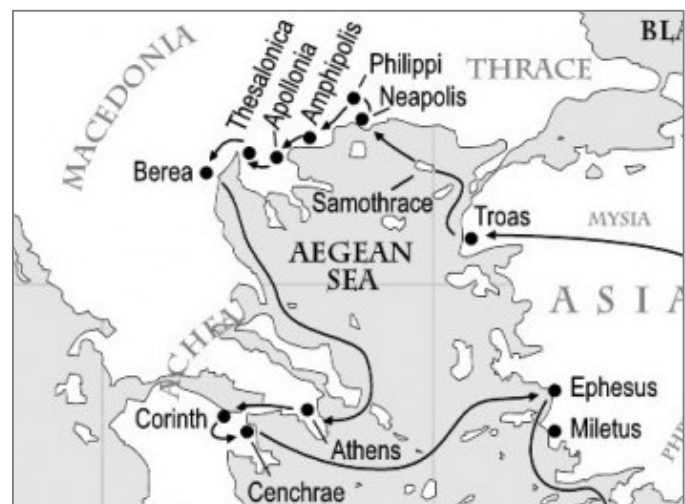
After believing in Jesus Christ as his Savior, Paul was called by Christ to take the gospel to the Gentiles. This was an amazing about-face for a committed Pharisee like Paul who ordinarily would have nothing to do with Gentiles. He founded numerous churches and wrote 13 letters that are included in the New Testament. Tradition has it that Paul was beheaded shortly after he wrote 2 Timothy in 67 AD. (*Adapted from Acts 8:3; 9:1-31; 22:3-5; 26:9-11; and Galatians 1:11-24.*)

BACKGROUND

Located in northern Greece, Thessalonica was founded in 315 BC. Over time, it became an important urban center because of its strategic location near the Aegean Sea. In the Roman Empire, it was the capital of the province of Macedonia and its largest city with 200,000 people. Thessalonica stood on the *Via Egnatia*, the Roman version of an interstate highway, making it an important city of commerce. In Paul's day, it was a self-governing community with enough Jews in residence to warrant a synagogue (Acts 17:1).

While Paul was in Troas on his second missionary journey, God showed him a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us." Paul and Silas went, stopping first at Philippi, where they preached the gospel, and a church was formed. After spending a night in prison for driving an evil spirit from a girl, Paul and Silas were forced to leave Philippi. They went about 100 miles west to Thessalonica.

For at least three Sabbath days, Paul reasoned in the synagogue with those present, and many believed the gospel. Because of all that he accomplished in Thessalonica, he probably ministered for a longer time than just three weeks. Several Jews and many God-fearing Greeks believed, including some leading women of the city. This angered a group of unbelieving Jews who then stirred up trouble for Paul.



So, the Thessalonian Christians sent Paul, Silas, and Timothy away from the city by night to Berea, 50 miles to the west.

Paul and his party began their evangelistic work in Berea in the synagogue, as was their custom, and many people there believed. Sadly, the Thessalonian Jews traveled to Berea and stirred up more trouble for Paul. So, the Berean Christians sent Paul away to Athens (southern Greece). But, Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. While in Athens, Paul wrote to Silas and Timothy, asking them to join him there. But, he soon sent Silas back to Philippi and Timothy back to Thessalonica to continue discipling those churches. Then, Paul moved to Corinth. Silas and Timothy rejoined him there, bringing a financial gift from the Christians in those Macedonian (northern Greece) towns. Timothy's report of conditions in the Thessalonian church led Paul to write the first letter from Corinth about 51 AD. Then, he wrote the second letter within 6-12 months after the first letter.

Here is a possible timeline (a best guess based on available information):

Church founded <i>Acts 17:1-15</i> Fall/Winter 50-51	Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica <i>1 Thes. 3:2</i> Spring 51	Paul in Corinth <i>Acts 18:1-5</i> Summer 51	Timothy came with news from Thessalonica <i>1 Thessalonians written and sent</i> Fall 51	News received <i>2 Thessalonians written and sent</i> Winter/Spring 52
---	---	---	---	---

CONTEXT

Even though you will find 1 and 2 Thessalonians after the book of Colossians in the New Testament, the Thessalonian letters were written much earlier. In fact, they are considered to be some of the earliest of Paul's writings. Only Galatians was likely written before them. Because of the short time between the writing of the 2 letters to the Thessalonians, it makes sense to study them together as we'll be doing.

1. What grabbed your attention as you read the ABC's of the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians?

2. Read Acts 17:1-15. What do you learn from these verses about Paul's experience in Thessalonica?
 - Vv. 1-5—

 - Vv. 6-10, 13—

- What events and people would still be fresh in his mind just a few months later when he wrote the letters?

Scriptural Insight: Paul's reasoning "persuaded some" in the synagogue services. His converts seem to have been mainly Gentiles, many of whom were God-fearers, or "God-fearing Greeks," but some of them were Jews. "Jason" (v. 5), Aristarchus, and Secundus appear to have been among these new believers. The "leading women" could have belonged to the upper classes, or they may have been the wives of the city's leading men. In either case, the gospel had an impact on the leadership level of society in Thessalonica. ... Three converts from Thessalonica—Sopater, Aristarchus (Acts 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10), and Secundus (Acts 20:4)—later traveled with Paul (Acts 20:4). Aristarchus stayed with Paul during his Caesarean imprisonment and traveled with him all the way to Rome. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Acts 2020 Edition*, adapted from pp. 347, 350, 481)

Gain Perspective

You've probably heard the phrase, "You need to gain perspective." But, what is perspective? According to the dictionary:

Perspective is an objective assessment of any situation, giving all aspects their comparative importance.

Objective assessment. Looking at all the issues and facts. That sounds like a necessary action to take whenever you must make a decision, doesn't it? We all need perspective to help us successfully navigate through the challenges of daily life.

Gaining perspective is like sharpening your focus with a lens. When you have trouble seeing, and you go to an optometrist to get your eyes checked, you come away with a prescription for glasses or contacts that will enable your eyes to focus again. When you put on those new lenses, what was once a blur has now become clear. That's what happens when you gain perspective.

Sharpening your focus not only clears up blurry vision, but it can also help us to see something at a distance that we were not able to see. Consider how a pair of binoculars works. Let's say you are driving down a highway to get to the mountains. You go around a curve, and there they are in the distance. You get excited about your journey there. But, you need help to see them. So, you pull out a pair of binoculars and focus on the mountain peaks in the distance. You get a glimpse of where you are heading.

That's what Paul's letters to the Thessalonian Christians helped them to do. They gained perspective about a bunch of things.

Biblical perspective on life is God's perspective on life. Paul helped the Thessalonians gain God's perspective on the persecution they were suffering at the hands of their neighbors. Having the biblical perspective about suffering helps you to stand firm and press onward regardless of obstacles in your life.

Biblical perspective on life helps you grow in confidence because you learn that your self-worth is not derived from any human being but from God. This gives you stability, certainty, and confidence in your God who is faithful to you. Others will notice and be benefited by this.

The Thessalonians had questions about death and the future. Biblical perspective about that gives you hope and assurance of your future with Christ in eternity. You will not fear death as those who have no hope. And, if you like eschatology (prophecy about the end times, especially Jesus' return), you'll enjoy Paul's letters to the Thessalonians. As you study Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, you will gain some perspective on the future that God has planned for all believers as well as for human history. One-fourth of 1 Thessalonians and nearly half of 2 Thessalonians deal with the coming of Christ from heaven for His own and the Great Tribulation on earth that will occur afterwards. You will gain perspective on the end times and how to view evil in the present. We will enjoy our time of discovery when we get to those passages.

Knowing the future hope gives you God's perspective on life that you need in your world today. For now, you must live and work in this world. Paul's letters to the Thessalonians have a lot to say about your daily life, including your work. You can view work as worship and see purpose in it when you gain God's perspective.

When you gain the biblical perspective on who God is, what it means to live your life to please Him, and what He has planned for your future, you get a security in Him that allows you to rest and enjoy life today. Who wouldn't want that kind of security? And, you will be able to serve God with greater enthusiasm and freedom to impact your world for Him.

3. In what areas of your life do you need perspective right now?

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today.

DAY TWO STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE OF 1 THESSALONIANS

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

In all of our *Joyful Walk Bible Studies*, we follow the inductive process for Bible Study. The inductive process starts with observation, looking carefully at what the text actually says. ***What does the Bible say?*** The next step is interpretation, which is trying to understand the author's intended meaning—to him and to the audience who would read or hear it. ***What does it mean?*** Once you know what the Bible says and what it means, then you are ready for application, which is learning how to live this out in your life. ***What application will you make?*** When you follow the inductive process for Bible Study, you will be able to confidently dwell in that truth.

What does the Bible say? (This is the "Observation" step in the process of Bible Study.)

Where do we begin? Have you ever heard the saying, "You can't see the forest for the trees?"

DAY THREE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE OF 2 THESSALONIANS

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say? (*This is the “Observation” step in the process of Bible Study.*)

Today, you will read the letter called 2 Thessalonians at one sitting. It will take about 7 minutes. You can read the letter in any translation of the Bible you choose. A copy of each letter (NIV translation) is included in this study guide before Lesson One. Feel free to mark anything that grabs your attention, and look for repeated topics or phrases. Then, answer the questions below.

8. What subjects did you see in this letter that you also read in 1 Thessalonians?

What does it mean? (*This is the “Interpretation” step in the process of Bible Study.*)

9. One of the major themes in both letters is the appearing of Christ. We’ll cover these verses in more detail as we get to them in the lessons. Right now, read them to get an overview.

- Every chapter of 1 Thessalonians ends with a reference to His appearance. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:13-17; and 5:23-24. From what you just read, what questions do you hope to have answered by this study?

- In 2 Thessalonians, 18 of the 47 verses deal with future events. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 and 2:1-2. From what you just read, what questions do you hope to have answered by this study?

10. Another theme shared by 1 and 2 Thessalonians is thankfulness. During difficult times, it is hard to be thankful. Read the following verses and record the reasons Paul found to thank God.

- 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3—

- 1 Thessalonians 2:13—

- 1 Thessalonians 3:9—

- 1 Thessalonians 5:18—
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4—
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14—

What application will you make to gain perspective? (This is the “Application” step in the process of Bible Study.)

11. As Paul found reasons to thank God in the midst of very challenging times, you can do the same. Write several reasons that you can be thankful today.

Respond to the Lord about what you learned today. Ask God to show you answers to your questions and what He wants you to learn through this study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“Start with Knowing and Trusting God”](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Start with Knowing and Trusting God

All the references to the end times in the Thessalonian letters are like red threads in needlework. They stand out like crazy. But, the softer color of thankfulness tones down the anticipation, impatience, and uncertainty of waiting for Jesus to come back and straighten out this mess on earth. Thankfulness sharpens your focus to who God is and what He is doing now.

THANKFULNESS REQUIRES KNOWING THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD.

Knowing who God is.

- What is God like? There's a lot of junk out there about God. And, your view of God strongly influences your faith in Him.
- That's why it's so important to really get to know the God of the Bible. God's greatness is far beyond human understanding. But, the Bible reveals to us part of the picture. We can know Him through what is revealed by Him and about Him. You can know Him.
 - ✓ God is sovereign. He rules over His creation with supreme authority and power, including the affairs of humans.
 - ✓ God is more powerful than anything or anyone else in the entire universe. He is present everywhere at the same time, and He knows everything there is to know.
 - ✓ God is holy and just. He is always set apart from evil, and He works righteousness and justice for all.
 - ✓ God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. God's love is patient, kind, forgiving and considers what is best for the one being loved.
 - ✓ God is good. He is good in the tough times, in different ways for each person, and in what He allows or does not allow into our lives.
- Much of the New Testament assumes you know these truths about our God. Paul's letters built on that foundation of truth so that Christians could really know the living and true God.

*"I keep asking that ...the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may **know him better.**" (Ephesians 1:17)*

- We will never know all there is to know about God. There'll always be some mystery about Him. But, there's plenty enough revealed in the Bible that we can know Him truthfully, especially in the Gospels. Jesus revealed God to us. Jesus is God in human flesh. He said, "*When you see me, you see God (John 5:19; 14:9-10).*" Every character quality of God is present in Jesus. You can study all the "I Am" statements in the Gospel of John and see this. Jesus brings our God to light so we can know the living and true God.
- As we work through these two letters, we are not just looking for the facts. But, we want to know who this glorious Father God is who gives us our identity and purpose in His Son Jesus Christ. Then, the Holy Spirit uses that Scripture to teach us about our God and to give us an intimate awareness of His presence. He is an awesome God!

Knowing what He says

- Knowing what God says is important. You have to start by considering the Bible as being sufficient on its own. It does not need our “improvement.” In it, we find what our God considers right and wrong across all time periods, all nationalities, all cultures, and all levels of civilization. In it, we find what our God thinks about us, who we are in His mind and in His plans. We recognize how much we are loved by Him.
- In this Bible Study, we start off each lesson by having you look at the biblical text. What is God saying to us? It’s written for us to know, understand, and obey. God gives us plenty of truth in the Bible that we can know and trust.

Knowing God through trusting Him with something

- In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, we’ll see evidence of what it looks like to trust God with someone or something important to you and then watch what He does. There are two aspects to trusting God.
 - ✓ First aspect: Trusting God while you do your part His way. To do your part His way involves your knowing what His way is.
 - ✓ Second aspect: Trusting Him to do His part alongside what you are doing. You have to trust God to work in the background of life and to make things happen in those areas over which you have no direct access.

KNOWING AND TRUSTING GOD LEAD TO THANKFULNESS.

- As our hearts become intimately acquainted with our amazing, personal God, we can hardly do anything but be thankful. When you have trusted God with something, and you look back to see what He did, how can you not be thankful? That’s why it’s so important to record how God has been faithful to you. *Malachi 3:16*
- In all of Paul’s letters, we can see that Paul trusted God with the welfare of his new converts and the newly established churches. So, he started off nearly every letter with thanks to God for the people themselves and for what God had done in their lives. He expressed thankfulness for his own suffering and difficult circumstances because of what God taught him through it.
- When you stop and think about who God is and what He has done in your life and in the lives of those you love, you can always find reasons to be thankful. The biblical perspective on life leads to thankfulness.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with His perspective on life in the present and in the future. Then, live securely in Him during this time of waiting.