



# Riverwood-Punchbowl Anglican Church

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RIVERWOOD

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## A brand new church

6 Studies on  
1 Thessalonians

Motivation for evangelism and ministry:

*“We loved you so much that 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”*  
(1Thess 2:8)

Living as a Christian:

*“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*  
(1Thess 5:16-18)

## **A new church springs up.**

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is intensely personal. Paul had very recently brought the gospel of Jesus to Thessalonica and a small community of Christians sprang up - one of the very first churches in Europe. Paul had to leave abruptly because of persecution, but he soon wrote to encourage and instruct these new Christians who had been left without much support.

Paul reflects in a very personal way on his ministry amongst them and the resounding faith and transformed lives of these new Christians. It is a rare privilege for us to be able to "eavesdrop" (so to speak) on the happenings in this brand new church.

The letter is like a kaleidoscope or patchwork quilt of issues which arose in the church. Although the letter is nearly 2,000 years old, and may be the earliest composition in the NT (only Galatians may be earlier), it feels as fresh as if it were written yesterday. When I read it, it constantly seems almost as if it were written directly to me and to our churches. Though we at Riverwood-Punchbowl are not a *brand* new church, many of the same issues confront us as we seek to grow and be renewed in the Christian faith.

I hope you will be encouraged and challenged in your Christian life as you read and discuss this letter, and as you think and pray about what God is saying to us as a church today.

**Max Gilbert, September 2005**

## **Week 1**

**THEME: Introduction to Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther: Being God's People in a non-Christian World.**

### **Day 1 Acts 17:1-4. Paul and Silas visit Thessalonica.**

Paul & Silas visited the town of Thessalonica on Paul's second missionary journey in about AD 49. How did they go about preaching the gospel? What success did they have?

### **Day 2 Acts 17:5-9. Some Jews become hostile.**

Why did some of the Jews become jealous? (v5) Why did you think the city officials were thrown into turmoil? (v8)

### **Day 3 Acts 17:10-12 Paul and Silas move to Berea.**

Do you think Paul and Silas should have left Thessalonica?

### **Day 4 Acts 17:13-15 Unrest at Berea.**

What happened at Berea, and who caused it? What do you think about the people from Thessalonica?

### **Day 5 Acts 17:15-16; 18:1,11. Paul, Silas & Timothy in Corinth.**

To what two cities did Paul go after leaving Berea? How long did he stay in Corinth? It is believed that Paul wrote both his letters to the Thessalonians during this time in Corinth.

## **STUDY PASSAGE 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

### **To Discuss:**

1. What was it like for you when you first heard about Jesus?
2. From the daily readings from Acts and from v6, what sort of problems do you think the first Christians in Thessalonica would have faced?
3. Read through v2-10 and note down all the things that describe what these first Christians in Thessalonica were like.
4. How did Paul, Silas and Timothy show their love for the Thessalonians?
5. From this passage, what have you found in either Paul or the Thessalonians that would be worth imitating? How could you actually do that?

**PRAY** that we might have the sort of faith, love and hope that the Thessalonians showed when they first became Christians.

## **Week 2**

**THEME: God & His People: Both Invisible in a Pagan World?**

**Day 1 1 Thess 2:1-2 Paul's mission a failure?**

Considering the account in Acts 17 (refer week 1), why do you think Paul might have considered his mission in Thessalonica to have been a failure?

**Day 2 1 Thess 2:3-6 Pleasing God not men.**

What motivated Paul in his mission to the Thessalonians?

**Day 3 1 Thess 2:7-9 Funding the mission.**

How did Paul generate money to pay for the mission to Thessalonica?

**Day 4 1 Thess 2:10-12 Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians.**

In what ways did Paul relate to the Thessalonians as a father relates to his children?

**Day 5 1 Thess 2:13-16 Paul thanks God.**

About what did Paul thank God?

## **STUDY PASSAGE 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16**

### **To Discuss:**

- 1.** Think about a programme or ministry that our church does (or has done). Was it a success or failure? What things made it a success or failure?
- 2.** There was strong opposition to Paul's ministry in Thessalonica. He was hounded out of town before he had hardly started. What do you think of Paul's response (v1-6) to what happened? How do you think you would have responded? In what ways could Paul's example encourage you in your own Christian life?
- 3.** Paul makes the striking claim in v8 that they were delighted to share not only the gospel, but also their lives. Discuss ways in which you have observed Christians 'sharing their lives' and how this has been an important part of 'sharing the gospel'.
- 4.** Discuss Paul's attitudes here to (i) how they supported themselves while they were in Thessalonica (v9), and (ii) how they lived (v10). In what ways would you adopt these same attitudes to your own work/ministry as a Christian?
- 5.** Looking back, why could Paul continually thank God? (v13) Reflect on ways that you/we can continually thank God for his work in our Parish and beyond.

**PRAY** that we might have a humble and God centred approach to ministry.

## **Week 3**

### **THEME: Relationships and emotions in Christian Life & Ministry.**

#### **Day 1 1 Thess 2:17-3:2      Who went where and when?**

From these verses, and the passages from Week 1, what can you work out about who went where and when, and who stayed put in different places?

#### **Day 2 1 Thess 3:1-3      Timothy returns to the Thessalonians.**

Why did Paul send Timothy back to the Thessalonians?

#### **Day 3 1 Thess 3:4-5      Is persecution to be expected?**

Was Paul surprised that he faced persecution and mocking wherever he went?

#### **Day 4 1 Thess 3:6-10      Timothy's report**

What did Timothy report about the Thessalonians? How did Paul react?

#### **Day 5 1 Thess 3:11-13      Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians.**

What did Paul pray for concerning the Thessalonians?



## **Week 4**

**THEME: Urging one another on in Living to Please God.**

**Day 1 1 Cor 13:1-3                      The most excellent way.**

Can you describe how actions done without love are worthless?

**Day 2 1 Cor 13:4-6                      Love is ...**

Try to learn these verses off by heart. Or, write them out on big sheet of paper, hang it up at home, and read it each day.

**Day 3 1 Cor 13:4-6                      Love is ...**

Discuss how this type of love could build up our church, and how the lack of it could undermine us.

**Day 4 1 Cor 13:8-12                      Love never fails.**

Out of knowledge, tongues, prophecy and love, which are permanent and which are not? What do you think this means?

**Day 5 1 Cor 13:13                      Faith, hope and love.**

Why do you think love is the greatest of these?

## **STUDY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**

### **To Discuss:**

1. Paul actively ‘instructed’, ‘asked’, ‘urged’ and ‘gave instructions’ to the Thessalonians concerning how they should live (v1,2,11). Discuss the extent to which you think our ministers should concern themselves with how we live out our daily lives. As members of a home church group, how do you think we should exercise such concern towards each other?

2. What reasons does Paul give for instructing the Thessalonians, even though he freely acknowledges that they are already living as they should?

3. Paul says that our daily life should ‘win the respect of outsiders’ (v12). Discuss why this is important, and what happens when the Christian community does not have the respect of outsiders. How can we at Riverwood-Punchbowl actively cultivate the respect of outsiders?

4. List specifically the sorts of behaviours which Paul urges the Thessalonians to continue and to develop. What do they mean? If we are to do likewise, discuss what sort of things we should avoid and foster in our own lives.

**PRAY** that we will be willing to accept and give encouragement to each other in our Christian lives, and that God will work in us so that we will develop in holiness.

## **Week 5**

**THEME: Thinking about Death in the light of Jesus' certain return.**

### **Day 1 Phil 3:20-21                      Citizens of Heaven**

Christians are even now "citizen of heaven". What does this mean, and what difference does it make in the present?

### **Day 2 Phil 3:20-21                      Citizens of Heaven**

What does the future hold for Christians?

### **Day 3 Col 3:1-4                          Raised with Christ**

Spiritually, Christians have already been raised to new life. What do these verses say about the life of the Christian in the present world?

### **Day 4 Heb 6:16-20                      A Sure and Certain Hope**

Compared to the probability that the sun will rise tomorrow, how do you rate the probability that Jesus will return at the appointed time?

### **Day 5 1 Peter 1:3-5                      A Living Hope**

What do these verses say about the hope which Christians have?



## **Week 6**

**THEME: A kaleidoscopic view of the Christian life.**

**Day 1 1 Thess 5:12-13                      Relating to our Elders.**

Do you think of anyone as “over you in the Lord”? Does anyone “admonish you” (in the Lord)?

**Day 2 1 Thess 5:12-13                      Relating to our Elders.**

How can we go about holding these people “in the highest regard in love”?

**Day 3 1 Thess 5:14                          The idle, the timid and the weak.**

Is there someone on your circle of friends who is “idle” or “timid” or “weak”? What does this verse urge you to do? Can you think of practical ways of doing this?

**Day 4 1 Thess 5:15                          Paying back.**

How far is it possible to put this verse into practice?

**Day 5 1 Thess 5:27                          A private or public letter?**

What did Paul insist be done with the letter? Was it intended as a private letter?

## STUDY PASSAGE 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

### To Discuss:

1. If you were away from your church, and going to be away for a long time, make a list of all the things you might include in a letter to your Christian friends at the church. (It might be a long list.)

2. Make a list of all the things that Paul included in this final section of his letter to the Christians at Thessalonica.

3. Verse 16-17 says, “Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances.” To what extent does this describe you? Discuss whether it is reasonable to expect a person to be joyful *always*. How does being a Christian affect your answer?

4. In v19, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” suggests that things we do can reduce or even eliminate God’s work in our life. Discuss what we might do (or not do) to cause this, and how we can avoid it happening, especially in the light of v20-22.

**5 and Prayer.** What is Paul’s prayer for the Christians at Thessalonica? (v23-24) Take time now to pray for one another in a similar way.

## **HOW TO USE THESE NOTES**

- 1.** Starting one week before your group meets, read the daily Bible readings on the left hand side of the double page, and think about the question for the day. These are for private reflection, before your group discussion.
- 2.** The questions on the right hand side of the double page are designed for group discussion. Think about these questions before you go to your discussion group.
- 3.** The study passages follow the morning and evening sermon series. You may find it helpful to take notes of the sermons.
- 4.** Please don't be frustrated if you can't understand or answer the questions: the important thing is that you read God's word.
- 5.** Use this guide for family or personal Bible reading, and if you would like to join a home group, please see one of the ministers.

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