



CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

A SERIES IN 1 THESSALONIANS

OCTOBER STUDIES



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KEITH AND MARION BIRCHLEY

Children of the Light

Thessalonica was the capital and largest city in Macedonia. Paul, Silas and Timothy came into this great city with their gospel message, and preached there on three Sabbaths (Acts 17:2), with a pretty good reception. "Some of the Jews were persuaded... as well as a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women" (Acts 17:4). But the Jewish community didn't appreciate this new religion causing them to lose so many followers. They reacted with violence and persecution to this young church.

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Because we belong to Christ, we are children who live in light of the day that he will return.

Paul had to leave Thessalonica, so he sent messengers to find out about how the church was going, and the reports were beautiful. The church was steadfast and abounding in love, and people all around Macedonia were speaking about the love and faithfulness of this young church. So in this letter, Paul speaks of his encouragement from this church, his fatherly love for the church, and he encourages them to keep going with the great work they're doing. To keep living in faith, love, and hope.

In every chapter of the letter, Paul mentions the second coming of Christ. There was some confusion in the church about whether people who had died under persecution had missed out on the second coming (this was about 17 years after Jesus died, so they didn't have the 2000-years of perspective that we do!). But he also says that the second coming of Jesus is something that should spur us on to live for Christ now.

These two themes come together in the verse which inspired the title of the series: "You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness" (5:5). Because we belong to Christ, we are children of the light and children of the day: we are children who live in light of the day that he will return. We live in the light of holy living, in the light of love for our new family, and in the radiant light of hope. Our prayer is that this series will encourage you to live the same way: as children of the light, and children of the day, in your new family at Village.

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) is used in these studies.

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WEEK 1

BORN INTO THE LIGHT

1 Thessalonians 1

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We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Have you ever been really ripped off?

How did you find out that something wasn't really authentic? Why was that important for you?

Read Acts 17:1-15

Paul was sitting in Corinth, waiting for news about the church in Thessalonica. What thoughts might have been going through your mind?

How do you think the church in Thessalonica would have felt?

What thoughts might've been going through their mind?

How would Paul's initial greeting in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 have encouraged the church? How does it encourage you?

Read through 1 Thessalonians 1:2–5. What is God doing in these verses?

From verse 2: what's helped sustain Paul and God's people in the midst of suffering?

Who do you need to take time to thank God for? Who do you want to be persistent in prayer for?

Read verse 3. Take a few moments to jot down ways in which faith, love and hope shape your every day life. Are they mainly active or passive forces in your life?

In verses 4–5. What caused the Thessalonians to believe?

Suffering can seem, on the surface to stifle the work of the gospel. It seems to promise anything but joy. How does the experience of Jesus, Paul and the Thessalonian church turn this theory on its head? How does this encourage you in your suffering? (verses 6-7)

Read Jeremiah 10:6–10. What do you think Paul was picking up from this passage (particularly in the words "true and living God")?

How are verses 9-10 a snapshot of your own walk with God?

Take some time to give thanks to God for his grace and pray for Village church, that we will be the hallmarks of God's grace to us.

A young child with dark hair, wearing a brown jacket, is looking down at a lit sparkler. The sparkler is bright and glowing, with many small sparks flying out. The background is dark, making the light from the sparkler stand out.

WEEK 2

THE LIGHT OF LOVE
1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

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Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

STUDY QUESTIONS

The ancient world, like the modern one, learned to be cynical about almost anything. When Paul and his companions arrived in Thessalonica they started telling them about their strange story of the gospel. And when doing this, they *needed* their lives to help support their message of truth.

Have you ever found yourself in a conversation where, unexpectedly, you have the opportunity to share the gospel?

Read verses 1–5. How did Paul share the gospel with the Thessalonians?

What do these verses say about God?

What are the things that Paul avoided (verses 5–6)? What were the things that Paul sought to be (verses 7–8)?

Do you think that these things are important for church leaders to seek/avoid today?

List the family roles that Paul uses to describe his relationship to the Thessalonians? (verses 7–12)

Which characteristics does he list with each role?

“Having so fond an affection for you, we were pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives.” Have you ever seen an example of someone sharing the gospel and their life with you?

The gospel is never delivered in a vacuum; it comes wrapped up in our personalities. You might not like the idea, but people are watching you. Your children, work colleagues, uni friends, parents at the school gate. They’re all watching you. They’re all taking notice of whether your actions and conversations match your beliefs. They’re looking to see if your faith really is authentic and makes a difference to your life.

What’s one way you need prayer in this?



WEEK 3

LIGHT FROM DARKNESS

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

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For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

STUDY QUESTIONS

How would you feel if you were separated from your Christian family?

Read verses 13–14. How did the Thessalonian church respond to the word of God?

Do you welcome the word of God into your life in the same way?

What's holding you back from fully trusting the word of truth?

Is there a promise you need to hold on to, a command you need to obey, or a circumstance that you need to persevere in?

Read verses 15–16. How did other Thessalonians respond to the word of God?

How did the other Thessalonians treat the Thessalonian Christians because they accepted the word of God?

What do verses 17–20 reveal about the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians Christians?

The first verb in verse 17 can be translated "to make someone an orphan." How might this be significant in light of last week's study?

"Paul yearns for them in part because, as his converts, their steadfast loyalty to Christ means that his own life has counted for something." What do you think of this quote?

How do you want to pray in light of this passage?

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