

# Life in the Word

*Cornerstone Sermon-based Life Group Lesson*



Sermon Series: **Hope Now and Forever**

Sermon Title: **Living with Hope**

Scripture Passage: **1 Thessalonians 3:1-13**

## Getting Started Sharing from personal experience

Lets start out with a bit of review on the historical background of the Thessalonian Church.

Paul most likely wrote 1 Thessalonians in A.D. 51 from Corinth. Although Timothy and Silas are mentioned in the beginning of the letter, they are not considered contributors to the actual writing of it. Keep in mind that Paul wrote this letter to defend his own integrity, to encourage the Church to persevere under persecution, to exhort them to live lives that were holy unto the Lord and to comfort and teach the flock about the coming of Jesus.

The city of Thessalonica was founded by Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's generals in 315 B.C. He named the city after his wife, and when it was conquered in 167 B.C. by Rome, the name remained. It became the capital of the four remaining districts. In 42 B.C., due to its assistance to Mark Antony and Octavian, it held the honor of being a "free city" (which means they could mint their own coins, take care of their own local affairs, and did not need military occupation, with the added bonus of some tax concessions). It remained a polytheistic culture.

Fun Fact: "The office of Politarch, mentioned twice by Luke in his description of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica (Acts :17:6,8 ), is unique to the province of Macedonia (modern day Turkey) and found only rarely in other cities. Archaeologists have so far discovered twenty-eight references to this distinctive office in Thessalonica. These findings prove that Luke was familiar with the political structure of the different cities in Paul's journeys and thus suggest that his recording of these travels in Acts is historically reliable." (Jeffrey Weima, Zondervan Biblical Backgrounds commentary).

1) With this in mind, put yourself in the place of a companion of Paul's...how would you suggest you spread the Gospel in Thessalonica? (Dig into the background of the Thessalonian Church a bit to come up with some strategies).

2) How might what you came up with differ from today's approach? Should our approach be different than in Paul's day?

### **Observation** Discovering the context

Lets jump in:

1. Paul begins this chapter expressing just how much he longs to see the Thessalonians. The word in Greek is *στέγων* (ste-gōn), a verb that refers to keeping water out of a vessel (like a boat or house). Paul is using this to show that he cannot contain his desire to see them any more. Lets reflect on the characteristics of a good shepherd...can you make a list? What does Scripture say?

2. Here in vs. 5, Satan is presented as the reason they were unable to come to the Thessalonians earlier. Have your plans ever been hindered? How do determine if it is the work of God or the enemy? How would you disciple someone else thorough a moment like this?
  
3. In vs. 3, Timothy is sent to check in with the Thessalonians. This is both for their care and for the peace of mind of Paul. What falsehoods might he be afraid have crept into the young church while he was gone? (You will need to do some research on Gnosticism, Stoicism, and some other early philosophies)
  
4. Once again Paul warns against flatterers, in Greek, σαίνεσθαι (say-nes-thy), meaning those who wag their tails or use words of flattery. How can flattery be a dangerous path? Have you ever flattered someone to get something you want? Has anyone flattered you for a distinct purpose? How can we avoid this?

5. Lastly, the exhortation is to love. Love in all things, trials, safety, peace, and war, there is nothing more important (think back to the greatest commandment). Why do we find it sometimes difficult to love as Jesus calls us to?

### **Interpretation** Discovering the meaning

Read 3:9-10. What does it mean for Paul and his companions to fill what was lacking in their (the Thessalonian's) faith?

### **Core Truths** Discovering Biblical truth

In your own words, share at least one core truth God has shown you in this week's study and why it is timely or significant for you.

### **Practice Makes Progress** Putting knowledge into practice

What action is the Lord prompting you to take this week as a result of being in His Word?

## Worth Memorizing

Scripture: **To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power...2**

**Thessalonians 1:11**

## Prayer Time

How can your Life Group pray for you this week?

## Praise Time

How has God blessed you and answered prayer this week?