

WEEK 4: Sept. 27–Oct. 3, 2026

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2–5; 2 Thessalonians 1–3

Principal Chapter: 1 Thessalonians 4

Spiritual Practice: Study

Core Emphasis: Holy and Quiet Daily Living

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

Leader Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Read 1 Thessalonians 2–5 and 2 Thessalonians 1–3.** Note the words, images, and themes that are repeated, such as *faith, love, hope, holiness, encouragement, work, prayer, steadfastness, perseverance, and the coming of Christ*.
- ☐ **Prioritize the themes of holy and peaceful daily life.** Focus in particular on 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12, and use the other passages for the week to strengthen the group's grasp of faithful work, mutual love, encouragement, and hope.
- ☐ **Review the historical note below.** Be prepared to make clear that Paul's teaching on holiness is a positive exhortation to honor God and love others, not a way to shame or control people.
- ☐ **Prepare for the spiritual practice: Study.** Practice leading the group through 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12, and devise several open-ended questions to help participants examine the passage carefully and discuss it together.
- ☐ **Prepare the meeting space.** Arrange the meeting place or provide the online link. Make pens and paper (or journals) available for anyone who wishes to take down questions from the reading. When meeting online, display 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12 on the screen.
- ☐ **Ask God to assist each member by name.** Pray that your group may develop into a community based on love, honesty, hope, and encouragement.

Historical Note on 1 & 2 Thessalonians:

Background: Paul wrote these letters to first-century Christians facing difficulties and uncertainty. His letters are full of care and encouragement. He thanks God for their faith, love, and hope, and urges them to keep growing in holiness and care for one another.

1 Thessalonians 4 outlines practical ways to follow Jesus. Paul urges believers to live in ways that please God, show greater love toward one another, “strive to live quietly, look after their own business, and work with their hands” (1 Thessalonians 4:11). Living quietly does not mean staying silent about injustice or shirking responsibilities. On the contrary, it means leading a steady, reliable life that benefits the entire community.

2 Thessalonians still speaks about perseverance, faithfulness, and hard work. Paul advises believers not to grow weary of doing what is right and good. Both letters urge the church to live faithfully in ordinary life while awaiting the fulfillment of God's promises in Christ.

Interpretive Care: At times, people have misapplied Paul's teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4 to control other people's bodies, their relationships, or their public behavior. Instead, it should be made clear that holiness is God's act of love, shaping us through love, honesty, respect, and freedom.

In the same way, people should not be discouraged from speaking out against injustice, asking for help when needed, or taking part in public ministry because of the idea of living quietly. The passage urges Christians to avoid doing harm and, instead, take their place in community life with love and a sense of responsibility.

The subject matter of these passages could involve delicate issues such as sexuality, relationships, jobs, disability, financial difficulties, grief, concerns regarding Christ's return, duties within the family, or feelings of shame about work and productivity.

Do not cite Paul's remarks on work to disgrace anyone unemployed, underemployed, retired, disabled, looking after others, sick, or unable to work. The idea of "working with your hands" was intended for a particular period and must be understood in the context of the Bible's broader teachings concerning care, dignity, and love for all.

In the same way, don't use "live quietly" to stop people from asking for help, reporting harm, seeking justice, or speaking up against oppression. If the conversation becomes difficult, you may say, "Paul's call to faithful daily living is not a measure of anyone's worth. God's grace meets us in many different circumstances. Let us speak with compassion, honor one another's dignity, and seek ways to support one another in love."

Opening (10 min)

Welcome & Check-In

Greet participants by name and quickly remind the group that this meeting is a place to listen carefully, speak honestly, and grow in love for God and neighbor.

Check-in Question: What is a normal aspect of your life, whether at home, work, school, church, or in your neighborhood, where you would like God to grant you more steadiness, peace, or love?

Opening Prayer

Holy and loving God, we are called to grow in faith, love, and hope. As we listen to your Word, teach us to live in ways that please you, love one another more deeply, and serve our neighbors with quiet faithfulness. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Transition to Scripture

This week we read 1 Thessalonians 2-5 and 2 Thessalonians 1-3. The letters urge a young church to stay faithful under pressure, grow in love, work responsibly, and hope in God's future.

Key Themes (10 min)

When you read 1 Thessalonians 2-5 and 2 Thessalonians 1-3, which words, images, or ideas caught your attention?

The letters contain several significant themes. Today, we will focus on three that influence 1 Thessalonians 4—holiness that pleases God, love shown in everyday life, and the hope that supports faithful work.

Holiness that pleases God: Paul encourages believers to live in a manner that pleases God. Holiness does not mean spiritual perfectionism or retreating from the world. Instead, holiness is a life increasingly influenced by God's love; it is characterized by integrity, respect for others, and freedom from habits that harm ourselves or neighbors.

- Key passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.
- What do you observe regarding the kind of life Paul considers to be pleasing to God?

Love shown in everyday life: Paul praises the Thessalonians for their love and encourages them to develop it further. Love is shown in respect, responsibility, hard work, care for neighbors, and living in a way that strengthens rather than weakens the community.

- Key passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.
- What could love for neighbors amount to in the everyday duties of life?

The hope that supports faithful work: The church at Thessalonica is urged to stay firm as they wait for Christ's coming. Christian hope is not simply passive waiting or fleeing from the world. It enables believers to support and encourage one another, work faithfully, and never grow weary in doing good.

- Key passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 5:8–11; 2 Thessalonians 3:13.
- What makes our hope in Christ effective when the work we do seems to be overlooked, hard, or incomplete?

We are called by the books of First and Second Thessalonians to live holy lives based on love, show steady faithfulness in our everyday duties, and hold on to hope so that we do not become weary in doing good.

Historical Context (8 min)

Who Is Writing? Paul wrote the epistle to the Thessalonians with Silvanus and Timothy; similarly, the second epistle to the Thessalonians also opens with the names of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Paul's coworkers helped establish and support the church.

To Whom? The letters are directed to the church in Thessalonica, an important port city in Macedonia, and to people who have given up idol worship to serve the living and true God.

What Is Happening? Paul's ministry in Thessalonica ended because of opposition, and the church he established kept suffering pressure after he left. Paul writes to encourage the believers whose faith is being tried. The letters also address issues related to Christian behavior, work, the coming of Christ, and the meaning of living faithfully before God's future appears. Those who had watched others die before Christ's return may have been disturbed by this, while others might have become disruptive or withdrawn from their normal work.

Why Does This Matter? The letters written to the people in Thessalonica are directed to those striving to follow Christ while facing uncertainty, opposition, and the demands of everyday life. Paul does not tell them to leave the world but asks them to become more holy, love one another, encourage the discouraged, pray without ceasing, work faithfully, and remain hopeful in Christ.

Leader Note: *The church at Thessalonica was young and facing pressure. Paul addresses them in a warm, encouraging tone, telling them that true faithful Christian living involves having hope in God's future as well as showing responsibility in the present day. In 1 Thessalonians 4, he urges them to grow in love, live responsibly among their neighbors, and work with their hands. In 2 Thessalonians, he encourages them not to grow weary of doing good, for their hope in Christ is meant to strengthen, not replace, their faithfulness in everyday life.*

- What aspect of this historical background helps you understand Paul's concern for ordinary work and community life?
- In what way does this context enable you to understand the phrase "live quietly" more fully?

Reflection on Personal Practice (10 min)

Ask participants to consider how it felt to read 1 and 2 Thessalonians this week. Remind them that the aim of Read a Chapter a Day is not to complete an assignment or gather information but to grow in awareness of God's presence and voice as revealed in scripture.

Ask one or both questions:

- What has been the easiest or most difficult aspect of reading one chapter a day this week?
- Where did you feel God speaking, comforting you, challenging you, or surprising you through the books of 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians?

Have three or four participants give brief accounts of their experiences. If your group is large, ask for short answers so more people can take part. Some participants will probably find Paul's practical advice on work, holiness, and life in the community immediately relevant. However, others may have questions or concerns about how these teachings apply in today's world.

You might say: “Thank you for being honest. The Bible frequently comes to us in the everyday aspects of life—such as the work we do, the way we speak, the relationships we care for, and the habits we cultivate. Likewise, God can use our questions and insights to shape us in love.”

Spiritual Practice: Study (7 min)

This week’s spiritual practice is **Study**. Study encourages us to ask sincere and faithful questions about scripture. Once we have slowed down and observed the text, we should consider what it means, what it tells us about God, and how it relates to the rest of scripture and to our lives.

Instruction: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9–12 slowly out loud, then ask participants to read it silently a second time.

Scripture: Ask the participants to write down one or two questions that occur to them as a result of the passage; encourage those questions that begin with:

- What does Paul mean when he says...?
- What reasons might Paul have for connecting...?
- What must this have meant to the first listeners?
- What could this mean in today’s context?
- What does all this tell us regarding God, love, and community?

Response: We have heard that passage; next we are going to put it to some questions. Examining the Bible does not mean we are putting it on trial. Instead, we give it our full attention, curiosity, and honest wonder to God’s Word. Note what seems clear, surprising, difficult, or incomplete, and consider what question this passage raises. Take a minute to reflect in silence and to write. Then offer these prompts:

- Why does Paul identify a quiet life and daily work with brotherly and sisterly love?
- What could the phrase “aspire to live quietly” have meant in Thessalonica?
- What could this passage mean for present-day Christians?
- How can we tell the difference between quiet faithfulness and shirking difficult responsibilities or injustices?
- Have one or two participants ask a question rather than answer.

Application & Discussion Questions (10 min)

Discussion Questions

- **A life that pleases God:** Paul tells the Thessalonians to “live in a way that pleases God” (1 Thessalonians 4:1). What could such a way of living look like?
- **Love that grows:** Paul tells the Thessalonians they already love one another, and he exhorts them to love one another even more. What, then, does it mean for love to increase in our relationships, in our congregation, or in our community?
- **Living quietly:** What does Paul have in mind when he says “aspire to live quietly” (1 Thessalonians 4:11)? What does this appeal signify, and what does it fail to signify?

Leader Note: *If the conversation becomes abstract, return to the text: “What in 1 Thessalonians 4 do you see? Is there a particular word or phrase that enables us to understand Paul’s message more clearly?”*

If time allows, connect this week’s texts with John Wesley’s understanding of holiness:

- *God’s grace does not merely forgive but also brings about transformation.*
- *Sanctifying grace shapes believers into holy love.*
- *Holiness becomes visible in love for God and love for one’s neighbor.*

Tell the group that being holy doesn’t mean withdrawing from everyday life; instead, it means showing love through how we live, work, speak, and care for others.

Application/Invitation/Call to Action

Allow a brief silence, then ask one or both questions:

- What is God asking you to do this week so that you may practice a holy and quiet faithfulness?
- What is one ordinary responsibility, relationship, or task you can treat as an act of love toward God and neighbor?
 - Examples might include carrying out a task with honesty, encouraging another person, showing patience at home or work, asking for assistance before difficulties become great, praying for a neighbor, or not stopping when trying to do good.

When we begin to pray, think of an ordinary place in which you want to become more faithful, loving, or full of hope.

Prayer & Sending (5 min)

Shared Prayer

Invite two or three participants to name brief prayer concerns:

- A personal need
- A responsibility that feels difficult or burdensome
- A person who needs encouragement
- A concern for the church or world

You may say: “As we prepare to pray, you might mention a burden you are carrying, a place where you need strength to live faithfully, someone who needs encouragement, or a worry about the church or the world.”

Closing Prayer

Holy and faithful God, we are asked to develop our love and to live in a manner that pleases you. Give us strength for the ordinary tasks that lie before us. Give us integrity in our choices, gentleness in our speech, courage in our witness, and love within our relationships. Do not let us become weary in carrying out what is good. Encourage those who are discouraged, comfort those who grieve, and let us become a people who reflect the hope of Christ. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Reminders

Before participants leave, make sure they know to:

- Keep up the daily habit of reading with the assignments for next week: 1 Timothy 1–6 and 2 Timothy 1. Look at the chart that includes the focus scripture for daily readings.
- Attend the following weekly Read a Chapter a Day small-group meeting.
- Check out the Read a Chapter a Day Facebook group and the weekly email for encouragement and conversation.

Leader Notes & Reflection

For Next Week

- Which question or activity generated the most meaningful conversation?
- Where did the group need more time, clarity, or pastoral care?
- What change would help next week's session be more hospitable and fruitful?

Notes

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.