



WINTER 2023 // WEEK 9

Life Group Questions

A People of Hope // March 11/12, 2023

Perspective and Perseverance // 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

## Introduction

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As we enter Paul's second letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, we see that it is somewhat similar to his first letter. Paul again mentions his thankfulness for the faith and love of those he is writing to as they continue to endure afflictions and persecutions. You may want to check out this Bible Project video for an overview of this letter: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/2-thessalonians/>

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

## Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

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- 1) What's the best thing you've ever built or created?
  
- 2) What is a lesson you had to learn the hard way?

## Getting Started

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Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
    - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
    - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
  - 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.
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## Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) Which part of this week's message (or passage) sticks out in your mind? What do you think the Holy Spirit might be seeking to emphasize to you through this?
- 2) In verse 3, Paul indicates that the Thessalonians faith is greatly enlarged. **From what you remember of Josh's message, what does a greatly enlarged faith look like?**

Why does God want to enlarge our faith?

Is there anything in your life right now that God might be wanting to use to enlarge your faith? What would it look like to step forward in trust in this area?

- 3) Also in verse 3, Paul speaks of the love of the Thessalonians growing even greater. Josh mentioned the idea of following the leading of the Holy Spirit in loving others. Think through your life this past week. **Have there been times when you sensed the Holy Spirit leading you to love others? Have you sought to follow in the way you were being led?**

If so, how did that turn out?

If not, why not?

- 4) In verses 4-5 Paul speaks of the afflictions, persecutions, and suffering that the Thessalonians were enduring. There is a common misconception that suffering (hard circumstances) = punishment for something we've done wrong. **Have you ever struggled with this type of thinking? Explain your answer.**

Where do you think this type of thinking comes from?

How does what Josh said about God's view of suffering particularly in verse 5 and in 1 Peter 1:6-7 help you in your understanding of this?

- 5) Verses 6-10 speak of the judgment that will come upon those who choose not to follow Jesus. **Take a moment to list those in your life for whom you long to come to know Jesus. Pray for them. Ask God to draw them to Himself. If you are comfortable, share these names with your Life Group and pray together.**
  
- 6) In verses 11-12 Paul again prays for the Thessalonians and names resources that are available to help them endure as faithful followers of Jesus. **What resources do you see in these verses?** (It is helpful to read these verses in another translation like the NLT or Message paraphrase).

**What is one step you could take this week to take advantage of these resources and participate with God in your transformation?**

## Personal Spiritual Exercises

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Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

**Prayer Focus:** When suffering enters our lives we tend to want to blame/repay/punish someone. Maybe the suffering is just because we live in a world afflicted by sin or maybe it comes as a result of another's words or actions, but 2 Thessalonians 1 is clear, we are to leave judgment to God. As a way of reminding ourselves of this, take time this week in prayer to thoughtfully reflect on *Psalms 34:1-8*. Read it out loud to yourself each day. Listen what the Holy Spirit wants to say to you as you do this.

**Scripture Focus:** Spend time this week reading through *Hebrews 11:1-12:2*. These are all people whose faith was enlarged as they walked with God. Some of them were persecuted and they all struggled in faith, but God was faithful to enlarge their faith so they could participate in His purposes and grow closer to Him and become more like Him.

## Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

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A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?