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OUR HOPE IN CHRIST

A CHAPTER ANALYSIS STUDY OF 1 THESSALONIANS

NAVPRESS 

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LIFETIME ADVENTURE

Bible study is a personal adventure. It is a means of intimate fellowship with the Lord, a fellowship that satisfies the heart and changes our life.

In *Our Hope in Christ*, Book Seven of *Design for Discipleship*, you will learn how to study New Testament books chapter by chapter. You will gain a grasp of Bible study principles that will enable you to continue this kind of study as a lifetime habit.

The method you'll use in studying 1 Thessalonians can be termed *comprehensive book analysis*. Your study will include three basic steps.

First is a *survey* of the entire book. Rather than concentrate on particular details, you will work to gain a broad overview of the whole.

Next you will do a *chapter-by-chapter analysis* of 1 Thessalonians. Your aim here is to study the five chapters separately, focusing on the specific teachings you discover in each one.

Third is a *summary* of 1 Thessalonians. After studying the five chapters in detail, you will now pull together what you have learned and write your conclusions.

Ask for the Lord's guidance as you work on each step. Psalm 119:34 is a good prayer: "Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart."

You will probably find it best not to refer to Bible commentaries until *after* you have completed your study of each chapter. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you directly from the Scriptures.

1 THESSALONIANS: YOUR SURVEY

By surveying all of 1 Thessalonians to gain an overall view of it, you will be laying a valuable foundation for the discoveries you make later as you study each chapter in detail. Do your best now to gain a good understanding of the background and general themes of this book.

The most important thing you can do to grow in familiarity with 1 Thessalonians is to read it over and over again. It takes only a few minutes to read through the book without stopping. (In most Bibles 1 Thessalonians is only three to five pages long.) Compare various versions, and also try reading the book aloud once.

Your written book survey will contain five main sections: principal personalities, historical setting, purpose, themes, and an overview.

After completing your study for the survey, record here how many times you read through 1 Thessalonians: _____

PRINCIPAL PERSONALITIES

1. Which of his fellow workers did Paul list as co-authors with him of this letter? (1 Thessalonians 1:1)

2. How did Paul describe the Thessalonian believers in the opening sentence of the letter?

HISTORICAL SETTING

Thessalonica—the modern-day city of Salonika in Greece—is first mentioned in the Bible in Acts 17:1-13. Read this passage to answer questions 3-5.

3. When Paul arrived in Thessalonica, where did he begin to preach?

4. What message did Paul give to the Thessalonians?

5. Describe the various responses in Thessalonica to Paul's teaching.

6. Record here what you learn from reference books (such as Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias) about the historical background of Thessalonica, the church there, and this letter.

PURPOSE

7. From your own reading of 1 Thessalonians and from reference books, what reasons can you give for Paul writing this letter?

THEMES

8. What major themes of this letter stand out to you?

9. What are some of the secondary themes you find?

10. List the important words that occur most frequently in 1 Thessalonians.

1 THESSALONIANS: CHAPTER ONE

When working on your written analysis of each chapter in 1 Thessalonians, you will begin with a passage description, then do a verse-by-verse meditation, and finish with your conclusions. These will help you in making a personal application from your study which you will also record in writing.

Before beginning your written work, read through the first chapter several times, perhaps jotting down a few notes on things that stand out to you. When you have finished your study of the chapter you will write down how many times you have read it.

While you may want to supplement your reading with a modern paraphrase, be sure to use a basic translation for your chapter analysis study. Some of the translations you will want to choose from include the *New International Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, and the *New American Standard Bible*.

PASSAGE DESCRIPTION

After reading through the chapter, your first step in analyzing it is to briefly describe the overall content. At this point do not attempt to interpret what you read. Your aim is to carefully observe *what* is said, not why.

One method of describing a passage is to rewrite it without modifying words and phrases which are not grammatically necessary to convey the central meaning of the sentence. This basically leaves the subjects, verbs, and ob-

jects. It is especially effective when the passage contains many modifiers.

For example, here are verses 2 and 3 of the first chapter written in this manner:

2- We thank God for you.

3- We remember before God your work,
your labor, and your endurance.

With this method you can quickly observe the movement of the passage.

Another method of describing the chapter is to make a summary outline. The first step is to divide the passage into paragraphs. (Most recent Bible translations already have suggested paragraph breaks. The original text was not divided into paragraphs, so you may decide to divide the passage differently.) After determining your paragraph divisions, write a sentence or two summarizing each paragraph's contents. Don't be concerned if you omit some details, but give a general framework which you can fit the details into later.

Here is a sentence summary of verses 2 and 3 as they might appear in a summary outline of the first chapter:

Paul tells how thankful he is for the quality
of life in the Thessalonian church (verses 2-3).

Use the lines below and on the next page to write a passage description of verses 4-10, either rewriting it without modifiers, or making a summary outline. Don't be concerned if you omit some details, but give a general framework which you can fit the details into later.

VERSE-BY-VERSE MEDITATION

The heart of your study of 1 Thessalonians is the verse-by-verse meditation you do on each chapter. Here you will take a prolonged look as you proceed from one verse to the next.

You will record your thoughts in this section under four headings: "observations," "questions and answers," "cross-references," and "notes and comments."

Under *observations*, you will simply give attention to what the passage actually says. Here are some questions that can help you make accurate observations:

- Who are the people involved?
- What ideas or teachings are expressed?
- What events happen?
- What are the stated results of these ideas or events?
- Where does this take place?
- What reasons or purposes are stated?
- How are things accomplished?

Here are observations based on verses 2 and 3:

2- Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonians.

3- Three parallel thoughts in his prayers:

1. work of faith

2. labor of love

3. endurance of hope

Since it is impossible to record every observation you make on a verse, record the observations which stimulate you to further thinking. But don't overlook the obvious!

Recording *questions and answers* takes considerable time and effort, but it often leads to rewarding meditation. As you grow in your knowledge of the Bible, the more questions you will have, and the more penetrating and significant they will be. At the same time, your knowledge and understanding will increase.

Here are possible questions for verses 2 and 3:

2-What did Paul pray for them?

3-What is faith? Trusting in God's character and obeying Him.

-What is endurance inspired by hope?

When a question has several possible answers, record as many as you can. The Scriptures do not always provide clear-cut answers on every issue, so be careful not to insist on always finding one. Major on what God has plainly revealed. Often it is best to write questions without writing an answer. This allows you more time to think about them. Later you can record the answers as you discover them.

In many cases a question will stimulate further study in other parts of the Bible. The Bible is its own best commentary. Scripture interprets Scripture. The content of one passage clarifies the content of another.

Here are some cross-references for verses 2 and 3:

2- 1 Thessalonians 5:18— Giving thanks in everything.

3- 2 Thessalonians 3:5— Christ's perseverance
- Heb. 11:1— Faith is confident assurance of the unseen and the future.

Good sources of cross-references are your own previous Bible study and verses you may have already memorized. If you cannot find a cross-reference on your own, use a concordance or the marginal notes in your Bible.

Use the space under the *notes and comments* heading to record additional personal insights and especially ideas relating to possible applications.

Use the lines on the next two pages to record your thoughts as you meditate verse by verse through the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians.

CONCLUSIONS

By now you have done a considerable amount of study. You have described the chapter, meditated on each verse, made observations, asked questions, discovered some answers, and found cross-references, as well as having made other various notes and comments. Now you can begin to bring all this together.

The theme is the central issue discussed by Paul in this chapter. Look back over your written work and ask, “What is the basic subject of this chapter? What is Paul talking about?” Record your answer here:

Along with finding a theme, you will also want to record other conclusions you make. Here is one example of a possible conclusion from this chapter:

Prayer, preaching, and the demonstration of power are three keys to communicating the Gospel (verses 2,5).

Use the following lines to record other conclusions you have from 1 Thessalonians 1.

You will also want to title the chapter. Your title will probably reflect the theme and conclusions you listed earlier. Record your title here:

APPLICATION

Bible study without application leads only to intellectual knowledge. Application is putting Scripture into practice in your life—recognizing the Bible’s personal message to *you*, and responding accordingly. The psalmist wrote, “I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. I will hasten and not delay to keep your commands” (Psalm 119:59-60).

The true benefit of Bible study is in obeying the Lord—receiving God’s instruction and putting it into practice. Application doesn’t happen by osmosis or by chance; application is by personal decision and action.

Writing out your application will help you clarify what you plan to do. It also encourages you to be specific. The following questions can help you apply the Bible to your life.

- Is there a *sin* for me to avoid?
- Is there a *promise* from God for me to claim?
- Is there an *example* for me to follow?
- Is there a *command* for me to obey?
- How can this passage increase my *knowledge* about God or about Jesus Christ?

You can remember these five questions by the word SPECK—sin, promise, example, command, and knowledge.

Use the following lines to record your planned application from 1 Thessalonians 1.

Record here the number of times you read this chapter in your study preparation: _____