

Ligon Duncan

1 & 2

# Thessalonians

*In Light of His Return*



 8-Session Bible Study

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Ligon Duncan

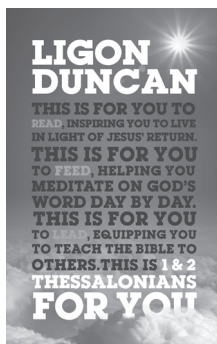
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*In Light of His Return*



✔ **8-Session Bible Study**



## 1 & 2 Thessalonians For You

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Study One > Ch 1-2

Study Two > Ch 3-4

Study Three > Ch 5

Study Four > Ch 6-7

Study Five > Ch 8-10

Study Six > Ch 11

Study Seven > Ch 12-13

Study Eight > Ch 14

Find out more about *1 & 2 Thessalonians For You* at:  
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1 & 2 Thessalonians: In Light of His Return

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# Introduction

One of the Bible writers described God’s word as “a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Psalm 119:105, NIV). God gave us the Bible to tell us about who he is and what he wants for us. He speaks through it by his Spirit and lights our way through life.

That means that we need to look carefully at the Bible and uncover its meaning—but we also need to apply what we’ve discovered to our lives.

Good Book Guides are designed to help you do just that. The sessions in this book are interactive and easy to lead. They’re perfect for use in groups or for personal study.

Let’s take a look at what is included in each session.

**Talkabout:** Every session starts with an ice-breaker question, designed to get people talking around a subject that links to the Bible study.

**Investigate:** These questions help you explore what the passage is about.

**Apply:** These questions are designed to get you thinking practically: what does this Bible teaching mean for you and your church?

**Explore More:** These optional sections help you to go deeper or to explore another part of the Bible which connects with the main passage.

**Getting Personal:** These sections are a chance for personal reflection. Some groups may feel comfortable discussing these, but you may prefer to look at them quietly as individuals instead—or leave them out.

**Pray:** Here, you’re invited to pray in the light of the truths and challenges you’ve seen in the study.

Each session is also designed to be easily split into two! Watch out for the **Apply** section that comes halfway through, and stop there if you haven’t got time to do the whole thing in one go.

In the back of the book, you’ll find a **Leader’s Guide**, which provides helpful notes on every question, along with everything else that group leaders need in order to facilitate a great session and help the group uncover the riches of God’s light-giving word.

# Why Study 1 and 2 Thessalonians?

Some people complain that Christianity is all about “pie in the sky by and by.” They say we need to jettison our escapism—our thinking about heaven and the future return of Christ—in order to do a good job of living this life. If it’s all about heaven, the charge goes, we’re never going to be any earthly good.

But that charge misses the point of all the teaching in the Bible about the return of Jesus and the end of this world. Scripture is written not so that we don’t care about this life but so that we live this life well—and its teaching about the future is a crucial part of that. In fact, you cannot live this life well if you’re not living it in light of the second coming of Christ.

Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians are two of the earliest parts of the New Testament. They were written less than 20 years after Jesus died and rose again. And they are filled with references to his second coming—since, from the earliest times, faith in Jesus would not have made sense without his return.

The letters were written to a young church plant, set up by Paul during his missionary trip to the Roman province of Macedonia (in modern-day Greece) in AD 49 or 50. Acts 17:1-10 tells us the story of how Paul preached about Jesus but was forced out of the city by those who had rejected the gospel. Paul’s time with this fledgling church was short—but 1 and 2 Thessalonians show us how he continued to teach these new Christians and pray for them from afar.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul’s love for the church he had founded is on full display as he encourages these Christians to live to please God—that is, to grow in godliness: in their relationships, their work, their mourning, and their honoring of their leaders. His second letter implies that the persecution had worsened and had become unrelenting; Paul explains why Christians face such suffering and how to continue in faith and love in the face of it.

In both letters, Paul links his exhortations to the coming return of the Lord Jesus. He wants the believers to endure trials and live life in light of Jesus’ future coming: to stand fast in their faith in the certain hope of future glory.

These two letters open a window onto church life among the earliest Christians. But it is striking how they speak to our churches in the 21st century too. We, too, need to heed the call to remember that we are waiting for Jesus, the risen Son of God, to return from heaven. We, too, need to be exhorted to live to please God in our lives. We, too, need the gospel to shape us. Then we will become imitators of the Lord and an example to all believers (1 Thessalonians 1:6, 7).



**1 & 2 Thessalonians**  
49-51 AD

# 1

## The Word Sounded Forth

### 1 Thessalonians 1

#### Talkabout

1. How would you describe what it means to become a Christian?

#### Investigate

 Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

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#### DICTIONARY

**Thessalonians** (v 1): people from Thessalonica, a city in the north of what is now Greece.

**Conviction** (v 5): certainty.

**Affliction** (v 6): suffering.

**Macedonia and Achaia** (v 7): two regions in what is now Greece.

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2. Paul is writing to believers in Thessalonica—but what else (or rather, who else) are they “in” (v 1)? What do you think this means?

3. What does the Thessalonians’ faith look like in their lives (v 3)?

4. These believers have become Christians fairly recently. How does Paul describe this (v 4-5)?

5. What was God’s role in all of this?

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## Explore More | OPTIONAL

Paul knows that the Thessalonians are elect—chosen by God (v 4). In other words, their salvation didn’t begin with them figuring something out or being a good person. It began with the love of God.

### Read Ephesians 1:3-6

- According to these verses, when did God choose us?
- What does God’s choosing of us mean that we become?

- Why did God do this?
  - How is this comforting to Christians who struggle with sin or feel they are not good enough?
- 

Paul thanks God that when he preached the gospel in Thessalonica, it didn't just come in his words; it came with converting, saving power (1 Thessalonians 1:5). The gospel is communicated in words, but it is not just words. Through it, the Holy Spirit transforms lives.

## Apply

6. Think about your approach to evangelism. How might the truths we have just read impact on the way we share the gospel, the prayers we pray, and the pressure we put on ourselves?

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## Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

Is there one lesson here that particularly impacts you personally? Perhaps it's a truth you hadn't thought about before or a helpful correction to your attitude toward evangelism. You might find it helpful to write it down to help you remember it.

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## Pray

*Share about one person each with whom you would like to share the gospel, and pause to pray together for those people.*

## Investigate

Wherever the gospel is accepted, the Holy Spirit is at work. He comes to convert, and he comes to sanctify. Paul next tells us more about how the Spirit was at work in Thessalonica.

7. What have the Thessalonian believers done, and what impact has this had (v 6-10)?

8. What kind of example do you think your church sets to other believers?

9. What does verse 6 tell us about what the Christian life is like?

10. What specific new beliefs have the Thessalonians embraced (v 9-10)?

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## **Getting Personal | OPTIONAL**

The Thessalonians were worshipers of pagan idols. But their story is our story too. All of us struggle with idolatry. An idol is anything in which we think we can find ultimate security and satisfaction, instead of in God. When we became Christians, we turned away from those things; but we also have to continue to turn away from them.

Here are three questions to help you identify any idols you need to turn away from.

