

Standing
Firm in
These Last
Days

KAY ARTHUR



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HOW TO GET STARTED...



WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, READ THE DIRECTIONS!

Let's face it, most of us think that directions are meant to be read only if we can't figure out what to do on our own. Reading directions slows us down and keeps us from getting on with the matter at hand. I understand. I feel the very same way! However, the brief directions which follow are an integral part of your study and will save you time and frustration in the long run, so take a few minutes and begin well!

FIRST

Let's talk about what you are going to need in order to do this study. In addition to this book, you will need three "tools":

1. A Bible. (*The New Inductive Study Bible [NISB]* is the ideal Bible for this type of study because of the single-column text, easy-to-read type, high-quality paper, wide margins, and innumerable study helps.) However, no matter which Bible you choose for this study, be aware that you will be instructed to mark its pages. So if you prefer not to mark in your Bible and you have access to a Bible program and a computer, you could print out the text of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and work from your printout. Or you could photocopy the text of 1 and 2 Thessalonians from

your Bible and work on that copy. (This is only permissible *if* it is for your own use.)

2. A four-color ballpoint pen, various colored fine-point pens, colored pencils, or an eight-color Pentel pencil (available from Precept Ministries International or at most office supply stores).

3. A composition book or notebook for working on your assignments and recording your insights and/or observations. Record your insights chapter by chapter, noting new chapter headings (chapter 1, chapter 2, and so on) as you move through the study.

SECOND


If you are doing this study within the framework of a group and find that you are not able to do each day's study in any given week, simply do what you can. Doing a little is better than doing nothing. Don't be an all-or-nothing person when it comes to Bible study.

Remember that when you get into God's Word, you enter into intensive warfare with the devil (our enemy). In Ephesians 6 we see that every piece of the Christian's spiritual armor relates to the Word of God. Our main offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which Ephesians tells us is the Word of God. Satan wants you to fight with a dull sword. Don't cooperate! You don't have to! Just recognize that it's warfare.

As you study 1 and 2 Thessalonians, you will be given specific instructions for each day. Each assignment will take about 15 to 30 minutes, depending on what is covered that day. Although you will have these specific daily instructions, there are basic things you need to know, do, and remember as you move through the books chapter by chapter. So let's cover these together now.

1. As you read each chapter, train yourself to ask the “5 W’s and an H”: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Asking questions like these helps you see exactly what the Word of God is saying. When you interrogate the text with the 5 W’s and an H, you’ll ask questions like this:

- a. **What** is the chapter about?
- b. **Who** are the main characters?
- c. **When** does this event or teaching take place?
- d. **Where** does this happen?
- e. **Why** is this being done or said?
- f. **How** did it happen?

2. The time references indicating the “when” of events and teachings are very important and should be marked in an easily recognizable way in your Bible. We suggest putting a clock  (like the one shown here) in the margin of your Bible beside the verse where the time phrase occurs. You may prefer to draw the clock over the time-related word or phrase, or you may simply want to underline or color the references to time in one specific color.

Remember, time and chronological sequence may be expressed in a number of ways: by mentioning a specific time, day, month, or year or by mentioning a specific event that clues you in to the time, such as a feast, a year of a king’s reign, etc. Time may also be noted by words such as *then*, *when*, *afterwards*, *at this time*, etc.

3. There are key words you will want to color-code in the text of your Bible throughout your study. This is the reason for your colored pencils or pens. Developing the habit of marking your Bible in this way will make a significant difference in the effectiveness of your study and how much you remember.

A **key word** is an important word used by the author repeatedly to convey his message to the reader. In the same way that a key unlocks a door, key words unlock the meaning of the text. Certain key words or phrases will show up throughout the book as a whole, while others will be concentrated in specific chapters or segments of the book. When you color-code a key word, be sure to mark its synonyms in the same way you mark the key word. (Remember that a synonym is a word that has the same meaning in the context as the key word you are marking.) Also mark pronouns that refer to the key word in the same way you are marking the word (*he, his, she, her, it, we, they, us, our, you, them, their*).

Marking key words allows you to identify the word and, thus, the sense of the text easily. You can mark words using colors, symbols, or a combination of both. However, colors are easier to distinguish than symbols when looking back at the text of your Bible. If you use symbols, try to keep them very simple. For example, I use a megaphone to mark the word *gospel* and then color it green: **gospel**. I mark the words **suffering** and **affliction** using a red pen and a symbol that looks like flames. I mark every reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in a cloud like this:

the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After the cloud is drawn, I color the outside margins of the cloud blue and fill in the center with yellow.

Color draws your eye quickly to the word and trains it to recognize the word. A symbol conveys the meaning of the word. It may seem a little juvenile to mark words in this way, but if you will get past that feeling and cultivate the habit of marking key words in your Bible in a distinctive

and memorable way, you will see a significant difference in your ability to retain what you study.

Let me give you another example of how to mark words. You can mark references to any of the Godhead with yellow to show the unity between the three, and then in order to distinguish between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you can draw a distinct symbol for each of the three with a purple pen. Mark the Father with a triangle like this: **God** symbolizing the Trinity. Mark the Son with the same triangle incorporating a cross in this way: **Jesus**, and mark the Holy Spirit with the triangle incorporating a cloud like this: **Spirit**.

You should devise a color-coding system for marking key words throughout your Bible so that when you look at the pages later, your eye will be drawn to the key words that you've marked. Once you begin color-coding key words, it's easy to forget what symbols or colors you are using to identify a particular word. You may wish to use the bottom portion of the perforated card in the back of this book to write the key words on. Mark the words the way you plan to mark them in your Bible and then use the card as a bookmark. You may want to make one bookmark for words marked consistently throughout your Bible and a different one for each specific book as you study.

In this study course, when you are instructed to mark a key word or phrase, you are given the New American Standard translation of the word or phrase. However, since other translations may translate a particular word or phrase from the Hebrew or Greek into English differently than the NASB, the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), and the New International Version (NIV) equivalents are noted in a footnote and listed in the back of this book.

4. Since locations are very important when studying a historical or biographical book of the Bible, you will also want to mark these in a distinguishable way. We suggest simply double-underlining every reference to a location in green (grass and trees are green!). You won't find many locations to mark in Thessalonians. But when you do see a location mentioned, marking it will give you a greater appreciation of what is being said.

It is also helpful to look up locations on maps to get a proper perspective of where things are occurring in relationship to each other. Using maps in this way will give you the "geographical" context. If you have a *New Inductive Study Bible (NISB)*, you will find maps pertinent to a particular passage placed right in the text for ready reference. The maps are included in the Bible text so that you can tell where in the world it happened!

5. Every day when you finish your lesson, meditate on what you saw and ask your heavenly Father how you should live considering the truths you have just seen. At times, depending on how God has spoken to you, you might even want to record these "Lessons for Life" (LFL) in the margin of your Bible by the verses that contain the truth you are applying to your life. Put "LFL" in the margin of your Bible and then as briefly as possible record the lesson for life you want to remember under this heading.

6. Always begin your study with prayer. As you do your part to handle the Word of God accurately, remember that the Bible is a divinely inspired book. The words you are reading are truth, given to you by God that you might know Him and His ways. These truths are divinely revealed.

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10,11).

Therefore, ask God to reveal His truth to you, to lead you and guide you into all truth. He will, if you will ask.

THIRD

This study is designed to encourage you to spend time in the Word of God on a *daily* basis. Since man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God, we each need a daily helping of truth.

The weekly assignments cover all seven days; however, the seventh day is different from the other days. On the seventh day, the focus is on one or more major truths covered in that week's study. You will find a verse or two to memorize and STORE IN YOUR HEART. Then there is a passage to READ AND DISCUSS. This section will be extremely profitable for those who are using this material in a class setting because it will cause the class to focus their attention on a critical portion of Scripture. To aid the individual and/or the class, there's a set of QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY. This section is followed with a THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK which will help you understand how to walk in the light of what you've learned.

When you discuss each week's lesson, be sure the answers and insights are supported from the Bible itself rather than opinion or just consensus. Using the Scripture in its context to support your answers develops

the habit of “handling the Word accurately.” Always examine your insights by carefully observing the text to see what it *says*. Then before you decide the *meaning* of a Scripture or a passage, make sure you interpret it in the light of its context.

Scripture will never contradict Scripture. If it ever seems to be contradictory, you can be assured that somewhere something is being taken out of its context. Therefore, when you come to a passage that is difficult to deal with, reserve your interpretations for a time when you can study the passage in greater depth.

Books in The New Inductive Study Series are survey courses. If you wish to do more in-depth study of a particular book of the Bible, we would suggest using the Precept Upon Precept Bible study course on that book. More information on Precept Upon Precept Bible studies and where they are being taught can be obtained by contacting Precept Ministries International at 800-763-8280, visiting our website at www.precept.org, or filling out and mailing the response card in the back of this book.

Now then, reading the directions wasn't too bad, was it? You are on your way. Remember the prize is never given to those who don't finish the course...so “hangeth thou in there!”

*F*IRST *T*HESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS



Jesus is coming...and I'm filled with questions: *How should I live in the light of His coming? How am I going to handle the pressures of society? The cravings of my flesh?*

Should I stop working and do nothing but "serve Him" until He comes? Or should I grab all I can from life in case Jesus comes before I have tasted all that life has to offer?

What about the suffering and affliction I've encountered since I came to believe in Jesus Christ? Are those who scorned, mocked, and even afflicted me going to get away with their cruel and unfeeling behavior? Is there justice—a day of reckoning, or will His coming preclude all that?

What will His coming be like? What will happen to those who hoped to see His coming but died before He came? What will happen to those who believe and are here when He comes? If the day of the Lord is coming and it's a day of darkness and destruction, where will I be when it comes?


Beloved, if these are questions that cross your mind from time to time or maybe even linger there, then you have chosen just the right book to study. As you study these next nine weeks, you will find not only answers to these questions, but you will find valuable words of exhortation and comfort to equip you to

stand firm and be found “without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

If you will give this study approximately 15 to 30 minutes each day, you will be awed at what you learn and at the transformation that results as you simply put the truths you glean into action. Studying the Word of God in this manner is transforming because you are brought face-to-face with the Word of God in a way that allows you to see truth for yourself. Remember that truth sets you apart unto your God and Father.

WITHOUT BLAME AT CHRIST'S RETURN—IS IT POSSIBLE?





DAY ONE

Whenever you begin a study of any book of the Bible, if possible it is always good to read through the entire book several times to develop a sense of the context, an awareness of the total content of the book, and how the author lays out the material. However, due to the abbreviated nature of this series, you will be asked to read 1 Thessalonians as a whole only twice in this first week of our study.

Then next week, our five-week chapter-by-chapter analysis of 1 Thessalonians begins. Hopefully, after this six-week study, you will move on into the three-week study of 2 Thessalonians. As mentioned earlier, it is in the study of these two books that you will find the answers to the questions posed in the introduction to this study.

As you begin today, remember that marking key words in your Bible is an invaluable learning tool. (If you haven't read "How to Get Started" in the beginning of this book, please stop and do so now. It is critical to your

study.) If you are hesitant to mark in your Bible because you think you may make mistakes, either print out a copy of the text from your computer or photocopy the text from your Bible so that you can work on a copy and transfer your marks and notations into your Bible later. In this age of erasers and correction fluid, don't be too reluctant to mark your Bible.

Now then, let's begin. Remember that our goal for this week is simply to get an overview of 1 Thessalonians. Don't become overwhelmed or bogged down by trying to understand the entire book in one reading.

1. Before you begin to read, make a bookmark listing the key words and phrases which follow. Mark them on the bookmark the same way you plan to mark them in the text:

- all references to the Lord's coming,
- *affliction*¹ and its synonyms—*afflictions*,² *tribulation*, *suffer(ed)*, and *suffering(s)*³.

(Note that a specific phrase for the Lord's coming was not given since these references vary in their wording. You should decide how you will mark such references and mark the phrase "the Lord's coming" in this way on your bookmark and then watch carefully for and mark each reference in this way as you study.)

2. Read chapter 1 and then record the following in your notebook:

- Who is writing?
- To whom is it written?

3. Now on a different sheet of paper from the one where you just made your notes, make a list like the one on page 19, leaving space after each entry so that you have room to make notes related to each chapter as you study:

MAIN TOPICS IN 1 THESSALONIANS

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

4. Now under your heading “Chapter 1,” record the main subject or topic the author covers in this chapter. (By the way, there were no chapter divisions in the original text of the Bible. Chapter and verse divisions were added later for the sake of reference and study.)



DAY TWO

Read 1 Thessalonians 2 and continue to mark key words. Mark any reference to *the coming of Jesus Christ* and references to affliction by marking *suffered*, *sufferings*, or *mistreated*.⁴ Be sure to mark key words with the color or symbol you chose when you made your bookmark yesterday.

Record the main subject the author covers in this chapter in your notebook under your Chapter 2 heading.




DAY THREE

Your assignment for today is to read chapter 3 and mark all references to *the coming of Jesus Christ* and any occurrence of the word *afflictions*⁵ along with its synonyms. Don't forget to make your notes on the chapter in your notebook.



DAY FOUR

As you have probably already surmised, chapter 4 is your assignment for today. Follow the same procedure as for the previous chapters.



DAY FIVE

Finally, we come to the last chapter of 1 Thessalonians. Follow the same procedure you have in the last four days.

If you have time when you finish your assignment, look at your notebook to see what you recorded as the main subjects in each chapter. See if you notice where there seems to be a change or “break” in what the author is saying, a place where the book appears to take a different direction. If you see it, note it on your paper. It will be a topic for discussion on Day 7.



DAY SIX

Now that you have read 1 Thessalonians chapter by chapter, read straight through the entire book in one sitting. Again, watch for a natural division in the book. You may have seen this break yesterday when you reviewed your notes, but if you didn't see it try to notice it now. Watch carefully what Paul covers in the first three chapters, and then notice how chapter 4 opens. What shift does Paul's letter make in its contents and/or direction?



 DAY SEVEN



Store in your heart: 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Read and discuss: If you are studying in a group setting, choose four people to read the last three verses of each of the first four chapters of 1 Thessalonians. Then have a fifth person read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28.

If you are studying on your own, simply read these verses for yourself.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY

- ☞ According to the text, who is the author of 1 Thessalonians?
- ☞ To whom was 1 Thessalonians written?
- ☞ According to 1 Thessalonians 5:27, what *kind* of literature or writing is 1 Thessalonians?
- ☞ Where did the words *affliction(s)* or its synonyms *suffering* and *tribulation* appear in your study this week? What did you learn from marking these words?

If you are in a class setting and have access to a whiteboard, an overhead projector, or can put up “Write-On Cling Sheets”^{*} and write on them, list insights as people share. Visual aids are a real asset in teaching, as the very

^{*} Write-On Cling Sheets may be purchased at office supply stores. They are large sheets of white plastic which can be written on with dry-erase markers as you would write on a whiteboard. They are designed to adhere to walls simply by smoothing them over the surface of the wall. They do not damage wall surfaces. No tape or tacks are required to keep Write-On Cling Sheets in place. If you cannot find these locally, you may order them from Precept Ministries International by calling Customer Service at (800) 763-8280.

seeing of what is being said and discussed aids the memory. Ask the 5 W's and an H:

- a. **Who** suffered or was afflicted?
 - b. **What** was the reason they suffered?
 - c. **When** did their affliction, suffering, or tribulation occur? **Where**?
 - d. **Why** did they suffer?
 - e. **How** were they afflicted, or how did they suffer?
- ☞ Now review every reference to the Lord's *coming* and list observations. (Again examine the references in the light of the 5 W's and an H.) You might ask questions like these:
- a. Who is involved in His coming?
 - b. What do you learn about the Son?
 - c. Where will we, believers, be at His coming?
 - d. What will we be like at His coming?
- ☞ Take time to think through the general content of each chapter of 1 Thessalonians chapter by chapter. Again, list your insights.
- ☞ Did you notice the “break” in the context of the book? What happens at chapter 4? What change in direction or subject do you note in this epistle (letter)?
- ☞ What did you learn as a result of this week's lesson?

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

You—sanctified entirely! Set apart for God, holy in spirit, soul, and body! It's an awesome thought, isn't it? Especially in the light of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have the confidence to know that when you stand before the Lord Jesus Christ to

give an account of your life (and we all will stand before Him) that you will be able to stand there without blame...unashamed?

Do you realize, my friend, how Jesus Christ prayed for you just before He was arrested, taken to an illegal trial, and convicted and given over to crucifixion? He prayed, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:15-19).

Won't you make it your goal, beloved child of God, to be the answer to your Lord's prayer?