

# *Off the Shelf*

## *Sunday School Lesson*

### *1 Thessalonians 1*

#### **Background**

1. This epistle was written by Paul around 51AD while he was in Corinth. He had previously visited Thessalonica during his second missionary journey. (Acts 17:1-15) While he was there, Paul went to the synagogue and preached the gospel. Some of the Jews and “a large number of Greeks” became Christians. This caused a reaction among some jealous Jews who stirred up trouble for Paul accusing him of “defying Caesar’s decrees and promoting a king named Jesus. Due to this opposition, Paul left Thessalonica.
2. Thessalonica is an ancient town that was previously called Therma which means hot springs. The Macedonian king Cassander founded Thessalonica in 315BC naming it after his wife who was a half-sister of Alexander the Great. Thessalonica was a prominent city in the Roman Empire. It was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and it was on the Roman highway to the eastern regions of the empire.
3. Paul wrote this epistle to further instruct the Thessalonian Christians. There were various problems with the beliefs and practices of believers that Paul wished to correct.
  - A. Some had ceased to work and had become disorderly because they believed that Jesus was going to return very soon. (1 Th 4:11; 5:14)
  - B. There were concerns about those who died before the Lord’s return. (1 Th 4:13-18).
  - C. Paul was concerned that persecution was changing their beliefs. (1 Th 3:1-7)
  - D. There was sexual immorality and the misuse of spiritual gifts (1 Th 4:1-8; 5:19-21)

#### **Greeting (1:1)**

***Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.***

1. Paul includes Silas and Timothy to make this a collective message. *Why does he do this?*
2. Paul addresses this letter to the assembly or church which are those who believe in the divinity of God the Father and Jesus. By using the term “Lord” both Jews and

Greeks would understand that Paul was equating Jesus with God.

3. Grace and peace are the foundation of Christianity. It is the grace (or unmerited favor) of God given through faith in the atoning death of Jesus that we have peace or reconciliation with God. (Rom 5:6-11; 2 Cor 17-21)
4. “Grace” was a common Greek salutation that meant “greeting” or “rejoice.”
5. “Peace” is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew “shalom” meaning “favor,” “well-being,” and “prosperity” in the widest sense, especially prosperity in spiritual matters.

### **Thanksgiving (1:2-10)**

*We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith; your labor prompted by love; and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

1. Paul says that he prays for other Christians with thanksgiving. Fellow Christians are a source of encouragement, wisdom and other blessings. We should thank God for them in prayer for they have enriched our lives in Christ. *What are some ways that other Christians have brought blessings to your life?*
2. Paul is thankful for their good deeds that are prompted by their faith. Saving faith in Jesus results in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who transforms the mind. (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 6:19-20) This transformation of thinking produces good works that align with God’s will for our lives.
3. Faith, hope and love for God and others are evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in Christians. (1 Cor 13:13) Endurance inspired by hope in Jesus Christ produces persistence and a continuity of actions based on what is promised rather

- than what is realized. This is self-control which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. (Gal 5:22) *How have faith, hope and love changed your thinking and actions?*
4. Paul is convinced that the Thessalonian Christians have a faith that will save them. He says that he knows that they were called or chosen by God and given faith when they heard the gospel. They did not just hear and understand the gospel but there was deep conviction of sin and evidence of changed lives. Saving faith is a gift given by God to those he has chosen. (Eph 2:8-10) It does not originate in the will or actions of man. (1 Cor 2:4; Eph 1:4-12)
  5. Another evidence of Christians who are born again is that there can be great internal joy when there is great external persecution, trials and troubles. *Why is this?*
  6. *What does Paul mean when he says that he lived among them in a way that was "for their sake?" (Act 20:33-35) How does this manner of living show Paul's love for them and the gospel?*
  7. The Thessalonian Christians became a model for others because of their reputation for remaining faithful to the gospel despite hardships. *Who are some other Christians that showed their faith through perseverance? How does such perseverance shine like a bright light in darkness bearing witness to the truth of the gospel?*
  8. Another evidence of saving faith is a change in what is deemed to be important in life. The things that consume our time, energy and talents are the things we enjoy and value. These things can become idols if they compete with God and (must be guarded not to replace God). A lie of the devil that keeps people from accepting Jesus as their savior and following him as lord is that they will have to give up things that they value (idols). The Holy Spirit changes thinking such that Christians don't desire former idols. This can be viewed as giving them up but it is really about becoming more like Christ.
  9. Faithful service is based on the certainty of a future judgment day either in death or when Jesus returns. Believers will be spared the wrath of God's eternal punishment and they will be resurrected in the likeness of Jesus. (Mt 24:30; Jn 3:36; Rom 5:1-5; Rev 19:11-15; Heb 9:28; 1 Jn 3:1-2)

***Off the Shelf***  
***Sunday School Lesson***  
***1 Thessalonians 2***

## **Paul's Ministry and Conduct (2:1-12)**

*You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition. For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.*

1. Paul reviews his ministry with the Thessalonians in order to remind them of the purity of his motives and the sincerity of his character in promoting the gospel. His goal is to proclaim the gospel as it has been revealed to him by God. (Gal 1:11-17) There were some who were teaching errors or were gathering followers with impure motives. *What might be some of the impure reasons for teaching a different gospel? Can you think of some examples of such popular teachers today?*
2. Paul speaks of his persistence in strictly adhering to the gospel despite opposition, insults and suffering. *What motivated Paul to press on? Do we have this same motivation to press on in the midst of opposition?*
3. The character displayed by Christians is very important. Who we are is more important than anything we say. We are salt and light that attracts others when our actions reflect the character traits produced by the Holy Spirit. (Gal 5:22-23)
4. Paul includes Silas and Timothy as apostles. The word “apostle” means messenger. *Who qualifies to be an apostle?* (Mk 3:14-15; Gal 1:19; Heb 3:1; 1 Cor 12:28)
5. Paul worked as a tent maker while proclaiming the gospel. (2 Cor 11:7-11) He did not ask or require his converts to support him. In this way, he demonstrated that he was teaching not to gain popularity or to make money. In many Christian churches

today, the salaries of pastors are paid by their members. *How might this cause concerns for the pastors and perhaps influence their preaching?* Institutional denominations like Roman Catholicism pay the salaries of the priests. *How might this situation influence their preaching?*

6. Paul says that they worked “night and day” living as examples of dedicated service to spreading the gospel. There is no indication of wasted time. We sometimes complain about not having enough time. As Christians, we need to take inventory of where we spend our time and energy. *How much time do we invest in ourselves versus spreading the gospel?*
7. Their relationship was like a father with his children. Their motivation was based on love to see them grow up in their faith by providing knowledge, counsel and encouragement. This serves as a model for all Christians. We should seek to mentor those who are younger in the faith and be mentored by others who are more mature Christians. This is one reason why it is important to be members of a local church.
8. Christians are to live lives “worthy of God.” *What does this mean?* (2 Cor 7:1, 10:5; 1 Pet 1:13-16)
9. Christians are called into the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God invaded this world when Jesus, the king, appeared. The kingdom grows when those who God calls by grace put their faith in Jesus. (Mt 12:28; 13:11-23; 1 Cor 4:20; Eph 2:8-9; Col 1:13)

## **Responses to the Gospel (2:13-16)**

***And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. For you, brothers, became imitators of God’s churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things these churches suffered from the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.***

1. Having faith in Jesus, who is the word of God, is equivalent to receiving the word of God. (Acts 11:1; Rev 20:4) This act of faith results in a spiritual birth in which the Holy Spirit indwells the believer. The Holy Spirit begins to work within transforming the mind and actions. (Jn 1:12-13; Phil 1:3-6; 1 Pet 1:23)

2. When someone speaks, they reveal something about themselves: their mood, knowledge, beliefs, opinions, character, etc. God has revealed himself through the words he commanded the prophets, patriarchs and leaders such as Abraham and Moses. In the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles further revealed God. This is why the Bible is true, holy and reliable.
3. The Thessalonians experienced persecution in ways that were similar to the Christian Jews in Judea. *What are some of the forms of persecution mentioned?* Persecution can be mental, cultural, as well as physical. *What are some forms of persecution that you have experienced?* Jesus said that his disciples would be persecuted. (Jn 15:20)
4. Many times those who are most opposed to the gospel are friends and relatives. This is because there were traditions, practices, lifestyles and other bonds that are changed by the conversion to Christianity. This causes tensions, fears, separation and misunderstandings that can produce hostility. (Mt 10:34-39)
5. Paul is not against the Jews. The Jews were the first group to oppose Christians because this is where Christianity originated. Early Christians were viewed as a rogue sect of Judaism. Paul wished that his fellow Jews would believe in Jesus. (Rom 9:1-3) Also, both the Jews and Romans were responsible for killing Jesus. (Acts 2:23)
6. Humans are sinful and objects of God's wrath without the forgiveness offered through faith in Jesus. (Eph 2:1-9)

### **Paul's Failure to Return (2:17-20)**

***But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan stopped us. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.***

- A. God is sovereign and he rules and overrules men and angels to accomplish his purposes. The Satanic opposition that prevented Paul from returning to Thessalonica caused him to write this letter. Paul was able to discern God's will in directing him in his missionary trips. He tried to return many times before he came to accept the repeated opposition as part of God's will. (Acts 16:6)
- B. Paul looked forward to being with the Thessalonian Christians in heaven. They were like his children and he looked forward to seeing them perfected and

glorious. He loved them and was proud of them like a parent when the children accomplish good things.

- C. There are five crowns or garlands of victory available to Christians:
  - A. An imperishable crown for leading a disciplined life (1 Cor 9:25)
  - B. A crown of rejoicing for acts of evangelism and discipleship (1 Th 2:19)
  - C. A crown of righteousness for those who long for the return of Jesus (2 Tim 4:8)
  - D. A crown of life for enduring trials (James 1:12; Rev 2:10)
  - E. A crown of glory for shepherding God's people (1 Pet 5:4)
- D. Christians will experience eternal joy, love and peace in the presence of Jesus. This will occur in part when we die. This will be completed at the resurrection when our bodies will be perfected. (Rev 6:10-11)

## ***Off the Shelf***

### ***Sunday School Lesson***

### ***1 Thessalonians 3***

#### **Timothy's Visit & Report (3:1-8)**

*So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that you would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless. But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.*

- I. Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonian Christians to "strengthen and encourage"

them in their faith. Paul loved Timothy but sent him into a dangerous place because of his great love for the Thessalonian Christians. The presence of pastors and teachers in dangerous places shows their love and commitment. Christians are to show their love by helping each other especially in matters of faith and moral living. (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 6:2)

2. Persecution for being a Christian is not pleasant. However, there are benefits that can come out of it:
  - A. It strengthens faith and weeds out those who are not genuine Christians (Mt 13:20-21; 1 Pet 1:7)
  - B. It provides opportunities for unity and mutual comfort. (2 Cor 1:3-7)
  - C. It develops commitment and endurance which strengthens our identification with Christ. (Rom 5:3-4; Gal 5:22-23)
  - D. It makes us more zealous in spreading the gospel. (Acts 5:40-42)
  - E. It helps us to remove sin and wasteful habits from our lives. (Job 23:10-12; Heb 12:10-11)
3. Paul rejoiced to hear from Timothy that the Thessalonian Christians were holding to their faith and expressing it in love. (Eph 1:15-16)
4. Paul says that he was consumed with concern about the Thessalonian Christians. This was a form of bondage. Now that he knew they were faithful and growing in their faith and love, he felt a new freedom and sense of being alive.

*Have you ever been so concerned about someone's well being that you felt this way?*

### **Paul's Prayer (3:9-13)**

***How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.***

1. Paul says his great love for them gives him joy. He longs to be with them to help

- them grow in their faith and knowledge of Jesus. (Eph 1:15-19)
2. Paul speaks of God the Father and the Lord Jesus as one affirming the deity of Jesus and the unity of God.
  1. Paul prays that their love would grow and express itself among Christians and others alike. Christians are to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are commanded to love everyone and so follow the command and example of Jesus. (Mt 5:43-48; Jn 3:16-17)
  2. Paul prays that their hearts would be strengthened. The heart is the core of our being. From this source, the mind is transformed. Our thinking affects our actions. (Mk 7:20-23; Lk 6:45)
  3. When a person becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within the heart. (1 Cor 6:19) The Christian has a new nature as well as the old sinful nature. These two natures conflict with each other. Paul prays that the new nature of Christ would grow and prevail in the lives of the Thessalonian Christians. (Rom 7:14-25; 8:5-14) *In what ways have you experienced the conflict between these two natures?*

## ***Off the Shelf***

### ***Sunday School Lesson***

### ***1 Thessalonians 4***

#### **Christian Living (4:1-12)**

*Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more. Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind*

***your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.***

1. Paul tells them to live in order to please God. *How do we do this?*
  - A. Earnestly seek to please God by obeying his commands. (Heb 11:5-6)
  - B. Living to please God is not an option for born again believers but a compulsion resulting from the transformative presence of the Holy Spirit. Christians are (servants) of Christ. (1 Cor 6:19-20)
2. God wants us to be sanctified or to live to serve God and separate from sin.
  - A. Sanctification is the process by which we are made holy and like Jesus. It begins with salvation, which establishes our position as adopted children of God. (Jn 1:12-13; 1 Cor 1:2; Heb 10:10)
  - B. Sanctification continues throughout life as our minds are transformed to know and (desire) the will of God. (Rom 12:1-2)
  - C. Knowledge comes from studying and applying the truths of the Bible. (Jn 17:17; Eph 5:25-26)
  - D. God teaches us through discipline (Heb 12:10-11)
  - E. Trials of life strengthen faith and commitment (1 Pt 4:12-13)
  - F. Sanctification will be complete when our bodies are resurrected at the return of Christ (1 Jn 3:2-3)
3. Paul stresses the importance of self-control. Christians are to live in a manner that is holy and honorable.
  - A. Christians learn self-control with the help of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 4:6-7; Gal 5:16)
  - B. Paul mentions sexual immorality because there were many sexual practices that were common and customary. Sex is meant for marriage only. Christians are not to follow the customs of societies where adultery, polygamy, premarital sex, homosexuality and other immoral actions are accepted. Temple prostitutes were common in Paul's time and some religious practices involved sexual immoral acts. *What are some forms of sexual immorality common in your culture? How do television, the internet and movies promote sexual immorality?*
4. Christians were often cut off from their families and friends when they profess their faith in Jesus. Therefore, Christians many times find new friendships and family among other Christians. This is the brotherly love mentioned by Paul. *Why do family and friends sometimes turn against those who change their beliefs?*
5. Paul says that Christians are to work diligently and honestly. Christians are to keep busy and mind their own business. In this way, they will gain the respect of others and not be a burden or dependent upon others. *How does being boastful of your work hurt your witness for Christ? How does being idle and a gossip hurt your witness for Christ?* (Phil 2: 5-8; 1 Tim 5:13)

## **The Translation of the Church (4:13-18)**

***Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.***

*According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

1. Christians were being persecuted, put to death or dying from other causes before the return of the Lord. Paul addresses these concerns. This teaching gives assurance and comfort that the bodies of all Christians will be perfected and made like Jesus regardless of when or if death occurs. Those who die before the return of Jesus will be resurrected and those who are alive will be changed. Christians will be united with Jesus when he returns. (1 Cor 15:35-50)
2. Paul refers to those who have died as those who have fallen asleep. This expression refers to the body and not the spirit. Death does not affect the spirit which remains alive. (2 Cor 5:8; Heb 9:27-28; Rev 6:9-11)
3. It is not clear when this event will occur. If it occurs before the tribulation described in Revelation, then there will be a period of time before his thousand-year reign of Jesus on the earth. (Rev 20:4-6) If it occurs after the tribulation, then Jesus will immediately return to the earth and begin his thousand-year reign.
4. *How does this teaching give encouragement to live like Jesus?*

## ***Off the Shelf***

### ***Sunday School Lesson***

### ***1 Thessalonians 5***

#### **The Day of the Lord (5:1-11)**

*Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like*

***others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.***

1. Jesus said that nobody knows or can predict when he will return. He will return suddenly and unexpectedly. Christians should live as though Jesus might return at any moment. *Is there anything you would do differently if you knew that Jesus was returning today?* (Mk 13:32-37)
2. Paul says that Christians have knowledge and a different view of life because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Bible provides knowledge which is like a lamp that shows the way we should live. (Ps 119:105; 1 Jn 1: 5-7) *How has the Bible changed your views of life?*
3. There are two types of people: Christians who are children of God and sons of light and unbelievers are children of the devil and of darkness. Jesus said that he is the light of the world so those without Jesus live in darkness. (Jn 8:12 & 44; 1 Jn 3:10) These are some examples of the light that faith in Jesus provides:
  - A. Christians have knowledge that unbelievers do not have.
  - B. Christians expect the Lord to return suddenly, while unbelievers think the world will continue without sudden changes.
  - C. Christians live with the knowledge that there will be a future judgment. Unbelievers live to please themselves and have no fear of being accountable to God for their actions.
  - D. Christians are chosen by God to be saved from his wrath through faith in Jesus. (Eph 2:1-9)
1. Paul says that faith, hope and love are required to live a life of obedience that glorifies God. (1 Cor 13:13) *How does your faith, hope and love of God enable you to have self-control?*
4. *Why do you think Paul says that faith and love are like a breastplate and that hope is like a helmet?* (Eph 6:11-17)
5. Paul again says that Christians have life with Jesus that is eternal. It begins by

faith in this life and continues after death. (Jn 3:36; 5:24)

6. *How can you encourage and help other Christians to grow in their faith and love for Jesus?*

## **Proper Living (5:12-22)**

***Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.***

1. Christians are to maintain peace and order by respecting their leaders. Christians are called to be a community that is characterized by peace, love and unity. The qualifications of leaders are discussed in 1 Timothy 3: 1-13.
  - A. Leaders must have a good reputation that comes from living with self-control.
  - B. They must be caring and hospitable.
  - C. They are responsible for Biblical teaching and discipline.
  - D. Their goal is to have a unified community of Christians who love God and each other.
  - E. They perform acts of mercy to help the poor and sick.
  - F. They are to lead in worship and prayer.
2. There are aspects of our human nature that work to break the peace of Christian fellowship: pride, ambition, intolerant, gossip, grudges, envy, jealousy and cliques. *How do we combat these tendencies?*
3. Paul says those who are idle must be warned. An idle mind is the devil's workshop. *How does work keep us from evil?*
4. Paul teaches that Christians are to be kind to those who are fearful, weak or have problems. This is bearing the burdens of others with love. (Gal 6:2)
5. Joy is a result of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Paul instructs Christians to focus on Jesus through continual thoughts and prayers. In this way, the joy of the Lord will always be with us. Christian joy is rooted in the relationship with Jesus and not in circumstances. Being conscious of God and living a life dependent upon his strength and will is the path of holiness. Prayer should be as natural as breathing.
6. The more we think about God and pray, the more we will see the goodness of God which leads to praise and thanksgiving.
7. Paul says that the Holy Spirit is like a fire within that can be quenched by sin. *Have you felt this burning presence of the Holy Spirit? Have you felt the sense of loss and loneliness that comes from sin quenching the Holy Spirit?* (Lk 24:32; Ps 51:1-12)

8. Christians must be able to discern good from evil. This begins with knowing what the Bible teaches and being committed to following what it says. Prayer and other Christians also help in doing what is good and avoiding evil. (2 Tim 3:16)

## **Conclusion (5:25-28)**

***Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.***

1. Christians are commanded to pray for their leaders. Leaders who error multiply false teachings and sins in their followers. Paul recognized that he needed the prayers of others to help him. (Rom 15:30)
2. A holy kiss was a sign of affection and not sexual in nature. It was practiced routinely in Jewish synagogues and the early Christian church.
3. Paul's letters were meant to be distributed among the churches. There is no secret knowledge in Christianity. There is a shift from plural to singular case ("us" to "I"). Paul may have written the ending verses rather than dictating them.
4. Christians are totally dependent upon the grace of God to know and grow in the faith. Grace is needed throughout life. There is no such thing as a Christian who has totally matured in spiritual knowledge or the need to grow in holiness. *Are only good things signs of God's grace?* (Rom 8:28) *What about Joni Erickson Tada?*