

SESSION 11

# doctrinally- sound beliefs



**SCRIPTURE FOCUS**

2 Thess. 2:13–17

**BUILDUP THEME**



LEARN DOCTRINE

God calls believers to hold on to Biblical teaching as their guide for life.

**MEASURABLE RESPONSE**

The student will determine Biblical truths that will encourage them to stand fast in the truth.

**MEMORY VERSE**

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle”  
(2 Thess. 2:15).

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ We are faced with temptations to “let go” of the things we’ve been taught. We’re presented with claims that the Bible is not relevant for today and that we must update our morality to fit the changing culture. God’s Word, however, doesn’t change. If we are led astray by other teachings that contradict the Word of God, we won’t be making the spiritual progress God wants for us.
- ☐ Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13–17. Paul encouraged the persecuted Thessalonians to stand fast in their faith by keeping a firm hold on the teachings they had received from him. It wasn’t easy for the Thessalonians, who were immersed in a pagan culture.
- ☐ Your students may be influenced by friends, coworkers, neighbors, or family members who are giving in to popular morals and ideas that contradict the truths they’ve been taught. This session will encourage them to stay true to God’s Word.

## Session Summary

Paul thanked God for the Thessalonian believers, whom God had chosen and called to salvation. The Thessalonians believed the gospel after hearing it from Paul’s team. At salvation, the Holy Spirit set them apart as belonging to God. In Heaven, God will glorify believers, making them like Christ. Because of their salvation, the believers had the responsibility to stand firm in their faith by holding on to the doctrines they had received through Paul’s teaching and letters. Paul prayed God would encourage the Thessalonians with His comfort and hope so that they could continue following Him in word and deed.

# Session Starters

## Option 1—Dangerous Trails

### Gather

- Resources 73-R6 through 73-R8.

### Steps

1. Display resource 73-R6, a picture of the Caminito del Rey Trail in Spain. Discuss walking along the trail.

**ASK:** Would you take this trail? Why or why not?

**ASK:** What would be the risks of going off trail?

2. Display resources 73-R7 and 73-R8, pictures of the dangerous Huashan Plank Walk in China. Discuss walking along the planks.

**ASK:** Would you take this trail? Why or why not?

**ASK:** What would be the risks of going off trail?

3. Relate the two trails to life.

The Christian life could be compared to walking along a trail. God calls us to stick to the path He has laid out for us.

**ASK:** Would you say that going “off trail” in the Christian life would be as damaging as going off trail on the Huashan Plank Walk? Explain.

4. Transition to the Bible study.

This session will help us understand the importance of staying on the trail God has established for us as believers. Paul wrote that believers need to stand fast and hold on, both would be good advice for those on the Huashan Plank Walk. We will learn that learning and holding on to Biblical truths are key to staying on God’s path.

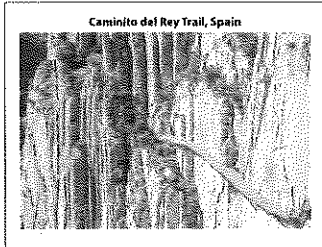
## Option 2—Warning Sign

### Gather

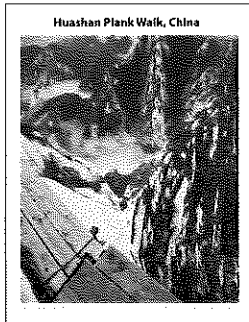
- Resource 73-R9.

### Steps

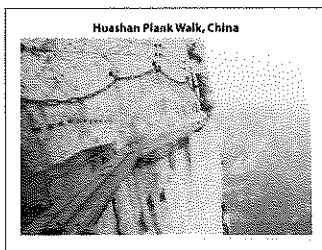
1. Show resource 73-R9. The sign is posted in Lassen Volcanic National Park. The sign’s warning is as follows: “DANGER Hydrothermal ground may give way underfoot. Off-trail travel has resulted in severe injury. Unlawful to leave the trail.”



73-R6



73-R7



73-R8



73-R9

2. Point out the illustration of the stick figure falling through the ground and discuss how your students would respond to the sign.

**ASK:** How would you respond to the national park's warning sign? (Q1)

**ASK:** Suppose all the other hikers were wandering off the trails and boardwalks and ridiculing you for obeying the warning. How would you respond? Would you call them back to the path or leave the path to escape ridicule? (Q2)

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Paul called the Thessalonian believers to stick to the path he had laid out for them, the path of Christlikeness. Wandering away from the path would hurt their testimonies before the unbelievers they were trying to reach. And wandering from the path would keep them from realizing the comfort and encouragement they had through Christ. This session presents Paul's serious warning to believers to hold fast to Biblical truths.

## Bible Study

### I. The Believer's Salvation (2 Thess. 2:13, 14)

Paul had just explained to the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord had not yet arrived (2 Thess. 2:1–12). The Rapture was still to come. In the meantime, the believers were called to stay on the course God had set before them. Unlike those who will be destroyed because they refuse to accept God's truth (2:9–12), the Thessalonians would not perish. They had accepted God's truth, and God had saved them.

#### A. Chosen by God (2:13)

**READ:** 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

Paul expressed thanks to God for the Thessalonians. He reassured them that God loved them. God's love is the basis of salvation in that His love motivated Him to give His Son to die for the world so that those who trust in Christ will have everlasting life instead of perishing (John 3:16). As believers, we can be assured that God will always love us.

As believers we can also be sure God chose us from the beginning, meaning before the creation of the world and in eternity past (Eph. 1:4). God chooses people for salvation, not because they deserve to be saved, but because He is gracious (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Although God had chosen the Thessalonians to be saved, they had not been saved automatically. Their salvation had both a divine ("sanctification of the Spirit") and a human ("belief of the truth") perspective (2 Thess. 2:13). From God's standpoint the Spirit sanctified

the Thessalonians or set them apart to Himself. From the Thessalonians' perspective, they chose to trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior. They were saved because of the Spirit's sanctifying work and their faith in Christ.

**ASK:** What would you say to someone who decided to leave his salvation totally up to God, thinking that God will save him if it is meant to be? (Q3)

No one can presume upon God's choosing him or her to salvation. To be saved, a person must exercise faith in Christ. It is only after we trust in Christ as our Savior that we know for sure that God chose us to salvation. The doctrine of election in that sense is for the benefit of believers, not the lost.

**ASK:** How should we respond to being chosen by God? (Q4) *We should be humbled and grateful, realizing we deserve to suffer eternally for our sins.*

## **B. Called by God (2:14)**

While God chose people to be saved in eternity past, He calls them to salvation at specific points in time.

### **1. Through human witnesses (2:14)**

**READ:** 2 Thessalonians 2:14.

God calls people to salvation through the sharing of the gospel message (Rom. 1:16; 10:17). And God has chosen to use people to be the primary means of sharing the gospel. He expects all believers to share the gospel. Of course, not everyone can preach like Paul or travel around the world as a missionary. But God has a part for every believer in the mission to spread His good news (Matt. 28:19, 20).

**ASK:** What opportunities do you have to share the gospel? (Q5)

Believers should share the gospel out of obedience to Christ, knowing He has chosen some to salvation and some will respond to His call. Christ will reward us in Heaven based on our obedience rather than on the number of people who were saved through our witness.

### **2. To glorification (2:14)**

A believer's salvation began with God's love and choice in eternity past. God then brought it to reality at a certain point in time. Salvation will end in the believer's obtaining of the glory of Christ. Though on earth we will never attain unto the full glory of Christ, we must never forget it is that for which we are striving. God's goal for us is to become like Christ. We will all be glorified in Heaven; no believer will miss out. But our rewards in Heaven will differ based on the degree to which we progressed in Christlikeness and used our lives to serve the Lord.

**READ:** Philippians 3:12–14. **ASK:** How seriously did Paul pursue Christlikeness? (Q6) *He pressed on in his pursuit of Christlikeness; he kept the goal of Christlikeness always before him.*

## **II. The Believers' Responsibility (2 Thess. 2:15)**

### **A. Persist in belief (2:15)**

**READ:** 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

Because the Thessalonians had been chosen by God and called to salvation, they had a responsibility to stand fast. Paul included the same word in his previous letter (1 Thess. 3:8). There he wrote that believers are to stand fast in the Lord. In addition, Paul told the believers in Corinth that they were standing in the gospel that they believed (1 Cor. 15:1). Paul means that believers need to maintain a strong mind and a determined will concerning key doctrinal truths about the Lord and salvation. Believers must know God's truth and not wander from it in any way.

**ASK:** What threatens to pull you away from standing in God's truth? (Q7)

**ASK:** What false teachings have been presented to you as alternatives to God's truth? (Q8)

### **B. Hold on to truth (2:15)**

Paul added that the Thessalonians were to hold on to the truths they had learned either by Paul's teaching or through Paul's previous letter. Believers are to grasp God's truths and refuse to let them go in favor of any alternatives.

**ASK:** What is the standard for judging doctrines or traditions? (Q9) *Scripture. We should reject any teachings that contradict, add to, or subtract from God's Word.*

At the time of Paul's writing of 1 and 2 Thessalonians (AD 51/52), only the books of James (AD 48-50) and Galatians (AD 49/50) from the New Testament had been written. The rest of the New Testament came later. But the Thessalonian church and other churches that had been planted couldn't simply wait over the next few decades for the rest of the New Testament. There had to be a solution to teach sound doctrine to the early church. So, the apostles wrote creeds soon after Jesus' ascension and passed them along to believers and churches as spoken tradition. Many of those early creeds eventually found their way into the New Testament as part of the inspired Word of God. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul wrote about receiving and then passing on a creed about the gospel. The creed starts in verse 3 and goes through either verse 4 or verse 7.

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 15:1–7.

Early creeds, which were originally written in Greek, were short and memorable. They gave new believers a way to recall and pass on important doctrines about God, Jesus' death and resurrection, the Scriptures, and salvation. Paul likely taught the Thessalonians doctrinal creeds, including the one he inserted in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul expected the Thessalonians to remember those creeds and use them in disciplining new believers.

Since we have the complete Bible, we don't necessarily need a creedal tradition. But we still need to hold on to the basic Bible doctrines included in the creeds that Paul and others included in the New Testament Epistles. Memorizing key Scriptures, some of which were originally creeds, is essential to holding on to sound Biblical teaching.

**ASK:** Name a couple Bible verses you will always be able to recall.  
(Q10)

**ASK:** What critical doctrinal truths are included in those verses?  
(Q11)

For those of you who are parents, make sure you ground your children in doctrinal truths. When they graduate high school and become independent, they will need Biblical truths to help them navigate life. Those who leave high school with no doctrinal moorings will be susceptible to all kinds of unbiblical ideas.

### **III. The Believer's Support (2 Thess. 2:16, 17)**

After giving the Thessalonians instructions, Paul prayed for them in their persecution. He knew that if they were to follow his instruction to stand firm and hold to the right traditions, they needed encouragement and strength that only God could provide.

#### **A. Eternal hope from God (2:16)**

**READ:** 2 Thessalonians 2:16.

Paul began his prayer by praising God. In naming Jesus before the Father, Paul emphasized the deity of Christ and set an example of approaching the Father through Christ, our Mediator. As the risen Savior, Jesus bridges the gap between us and God. Christ speaks to the Father on our behalf. Paul underscored the unity of Father and Son. They both love us and acted as one on our behalf.

Surrounded by the pagan culture from which they had recently turned, the young Thessalonian church needed reassurance of the comfort available in God. Paul wrote that God had already given this consolation and that it will last forever. The believers needed to turn to God as their source of comfort in their confusion and distress. Any comfort the world offers is temporary. God's comfort is eternal.

**ASK:** What life circumstances prove the world's comforts are only temporary? (Q12) *Sickness, grief, loss, old age, tragedy, death.*

We may not be facing physical persecution, but we all have problems and find ourselves in need of comfort and encouragement. Our everlasting comfort comes from God. His comfort lasts throughout and beyond all circumstances, even beyond death.

Similarly, God offers us "good hope." The world offers false hopes of happiness through temporary pleasures and possessions. The things of this earth are not necessarily evil, but as sinful human beings, our only true hope can be found in Christ and His resurrection. Peter described the same hope as a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3)—the hope of eternal life.

**ASK:** How should our eternal hope from God affect our daily lives? (Q13) *We should have joy, comfort in pain and sorrow, and a sense of purpose.*

Paul noted that God gives His comfort and hope through His grace. His good gifts to us—especially the gift of salvation—are undeserved (Eph. 2:8). We can do nothing to earn His favor, but the Father's love for us compelled Him to stoop down to help sinful man. He had mercy on us and so provided a way of salvation and hope.

Holding on firmly to these truths expressed in Paul's praise will keep us grounded in our faith. God's salvation through His love and grace proves we can trust Him. As we learn to depend on His comfort and hope offered through His Word and the Spirit, we can avoid being led astray by the world.

## **B. Present help from God (2:17)**

**READ:** 2 Thessalonians 2:17.

Knowing that the believers could not stand firm through their own strength, Paul prayed that God would comfort the Thessalonians' hearts and establish them in good words and works. Throughout Scripture the "heart" means the inner man; it is viewed as the center of human emotion and thought. Paul had used similar language in his previous letter, asking God to establish the Thessalonians' hearts blameless before Him (1 Thess. 3:13). God will give believers courage and confidence in their hearts to continue following Him both in word and deed.

**ASK:** When have you needed extra confidence while following God? (Q14)

God has called all believers to stand fast in the faith. He has given us His Word to guide us and His Spirit to encourage us as we seek to stay on the right trail, holding to His teachings until Christ returns.

# Session Application

## Steps

1. Discuss strengthening doctrinal beliefs.

**ASK:** What are some of the popular beliefs that are contrary to Bible doctrine? (Q15) *Evolution and the big bang theory, universalism (belief that everyone will be saved), new gender theories, belief that truth is relative rather than absolute.*

**ASK:** What are you doing to learn and hold on to Bible doctrines? (Q16)

**ASK:** What are you doing to help others, including family members, learn and hold on to Bible doctrines? (Q17)

**ASK:** What will you start doing to strengthen your doctrinal stand even more? (Q18)

2. Lead in a pray similar to Paul's, asking God to give your students the comfort they need in today's world. Ask that He would strengthen their hearts and guide them in His truth for good speech and conduct.