Adult Bible Study in Simplified English

Study Guide

Galatians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians

BUILDING THE CHURCH ON THE GOOD NEWS

Janet Roberts
Introduction

Galatians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians:
Building the Church on the Good News

The great missionary, Paul, wrote these three books in the Bible. He wrote them as letters to the churches in the area of Galatia and the city of Thessalonica. Paul and all the special followers of Jesus preached the Good News everywhere. Paul was called to preach to those who were not Jews. Paul started many churches in Asia and Europe. He wrote to help them in their new Christian lives. He wrote to tell them a better way. He wrote to give them truth. His letters helped in building the Church on the Good News.

Paul had strong words for the Christians in Galatia. He was afraid that they would follow false teachers. This short letter tells us what the Christian life is all about. It tells that we are saved only by faith in Christ Jesus. It gives a clear understanding of the Good News in life. In our time we need a clear understanding of the Christian life and the Good News.

Paul’s letters to the Christians in Thessalonica show his great concern for the church he had planted in that city. This was a church that had hard times because they were the first Christian church in their area. They had questions that he answered in the second letter. He told them how to have a healthy church life.

Unit 1: Only by Faith in Christ Jesus

| Lesson 1 | Only One Good News | Galatians 1:1-10 |
| Lesson 2 | The Good News Makes a Difference | Galatians 1:11-24 |
| Lesson 3 | United Because of the Good News | Galatians 2:1-10 |
| Lesson 4 | One Table for God’s Church | Galatians 2:11-21 |
| Lesson 5 | It’s All Faith | Galatians 3:1-9, 11, 13a, 14-18, 26-29 |
| Lesson 6 | Set Free to Be God’s Children | Galatians 4:1-10, 5:1 |

Unit 2: The Good News in Life

| Lesson 7 | Walk by the Spirit | Galatians 5:13-26 |
| Lesson 8 | Life in a Good Church | Galatians 6:1-10, 14-16 |

Unit 3: Healthy Church Life

| Lesson 9 | Thank God for Such a Church! | 1 Thessalonians 1 |
| Lesson 10 | What God Wants in His Leaders | 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, 5:12-13 |
| Lesson 11 | Live to Please God | 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12, 5:14-24 |
| Lesson 12 | Hope for Now and Forever | 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 5:11 |
| Lesson 13 | Being a Healthy Church in Hard Times | 2 Thessalonians 3:1-16 |
### Unit 1

**Lesson 1**
- **prove**: show that something is true or right
- **calling**: special work given to a person by God
- **doubt**: think that something may not be true or right
- **blessing**: asking God’s favor to be on someone and God’s favor that is given to someone
- **pattern**: a way of doing something that is the same again and again. Something that can be seen as repeating, not changing.

**Lesson 2**
- **fool**: trick or make someone believe something that is not true
- **amazed**: felt great surprise or wonder
- **prepared**: got ready or did what was needed to be ready
- **message**: an important idea or news that one person gives to another

**Lesson 3**
- **united**: joined together as one group
- **invited**: asked to come somewhere or do something
- **bother**: to cause to feel hurt or troubled
- **divide**: not unite, to disagree and separate

**Lesson 4**
- **members**: people who join and become part of a group

**Lesson 5**
- **segregated**: to keep people apart from each other because of their differences
- **equal**: the same in worth or value; having the same rights
- **principle**: a rule of truth used to decide how to act

**Lesson 6**
- **alcoholic**: a person who has a strong desire to drink alcohol and be drunk as a habit
- **history**: what has happened in the life of a group of people
- **goal**: something one tries to do to get for a certain purpose

### Word List

**Unit 2**

**Lesson 7**
- **advice**: words given by one to another explaining what to do or how to do something
- **marching band**: a group of people playing music and walking together in a way that shows they are following a leader, often seen in parades and at football games
Word List

**opposites:** things that are different in every way or not alike in any way. Some examples are light and dark or day and night.

**Lesson 8**

**babysit:** to be with and take care of children who are not your own. Sometimes people do this as a job.

**lazy:** not willing to work or try hard

**pastor:** the leader of a Christian church. Some churches use other names for their leaders.

**volunteers:** people who work without pay, usually to help others in some way

**Lesson 11**

**stars:** These are not lights in the sky, but are people who are well known for some reason like sports, acting, singing, dancing, etc.

**control:** the power to rule over, guide, or manage something or someone

**encourage:** to willingly give words or actions that give hope in the face of danger, pain and trouble, or to make someone feel more sure of themselves

**Unit 3**

**Lesson 9**

**polite:** using words or actions that show respect for others

**signing:** using hand motions to tell others what you cannot say with words. Deaf or mute people use signing to give a message to another person.

**harvest:** the food that is picked from the field when it is ready

**Lesson 10**

**ministries:** groups of people who work together to help certain other groups of people with special needs. Churches have many different groups like this.

**qualities:** what makes a person who they are and helps others know how they might act. These can be seen by others when watching what a person does or says.

**hearts:** As used here, the word does not mean the organ in your body, but a word used to talk about what people are really like, who they really are, parts of people which only God can know well.

**Lesson 12**

**normal:** the same as most everyone else, usual, not different from what is or what happens with most people

**prepare:** to get ready for something or someone

**suddenly:** happens or is done quickly and without knowing before

**Lesson 13**

**pretending:** acting in a false way as if it was true in order to trick others, also acting like something is true that is not. For example, children like to pretend they are adults while they are playing.

**request:** asking to get an answer or an action. Here, the word means a prayer asking God to act.

**warning:** telling of a about a possible danger or advising someone to be careful
Galatians:
Only by Faith in Christ Jesus

Lesson 1
Only One Good News
Galatians 1:1-10

Lesson 2
The Good News Makes a Difference
Galatians 1:11-24

Lesson 3
United Because of the Good News
Galatians 2:1-10

Lesson 4
One Table for God’s Church
Galatians 2:11-21

Lesson 5
It’s All Faith
Galatians 3:1-9, 11, 13a, 14-18, 26-29

Lesson 6
Set Free to Be God’s Children
Galatians 4:1-10, 5:1

ONLY BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

The false teachers wanted the Galatians to obey Jewish laws to be saved. This was not God’s idea. It was a wrong idea. There is only one Good News. A person is saved by faith in Christ Jesus plus nothing.

These false teachers also had wrong ideas about Paul. By reading what Paul wrote, we can tell what they were saying about him. They said Paul did not have a special calling from God. Paul explained how the Good News changed in his life and how God called him. The false teachers said Paul’s teaching was wrong. They said his Good News was different from theirs. Paul showed his teaching was from God. Paul taught that Christians are united because of the Good News. This was God’s plan from the beginning. God’s Church can sit together at one table. The false teachers said Paul’s teaching let Christians live a sinful life. Paul answered this by telling how faith helps us live a holy life. We are set free from sin to be God’s children.

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Only One Good News

The world is full of people with ideas about gods or God. We call these ideas *religions*. Many of these ideas are not true. They tell people to do something for God. The Bible tells us the truth about God. The Good News of Jesus is found in the first four books of the New Testament. The Good News is all about what God did for us.

The Good News is that God became a man, the man Christ Jesus. Jesus came as a baby and lived a perfect life. He died on the cross for our sins. He rose from the dead and now lives in heaven. He will come back again. A person is saved by faith in Jesus plus nothing. We must believe this good news and not add to it or take away from it. Changing it in any way it is bad news.

People have always tried to add or take away from the Good News. This has been happening since Jesus lived on earth. This is one of the reasons Paul wrote this letter. These new believers did not have the New Testament. Paul had told them the Good News of Jesus. Others had come to their country with different ideas. The believers had started listening to them. Believers were accepting different ideas as truth. This was a big problem. Paul had to help them understand the truth. There is only one Good News.

**Paul’s Calling (Galatians 1:1-2)**

Paul wanted to help the believers in the area of Galatia understand the truth. First, he had to *prove* his words were from God. Then they would know why they should listen to him.
Some were saying that the believers should not listen to Paul. They said Paul had been sent by a church or a man who had wrong ideas.

Paul proved his words were from God. He explained that he had a calling from God. Paul was called to be a missionary to people who were not Jewish. Acts 22 tells how Paul became a believer. Paul tells about his calling in verses 17-21 (see the last page of this lesson). Verse 21 proves that God wanted Paul to be a missionary. Paul also wrote this in his letter to the Romans: “I am speaking to you people who are not Jews. As long as I am a missionary to you, I want you to know how important my job is” (Romans 11:13).

Some people wanted the new believers to doubt Paul. This was his answer to people who doubted his words. Paul was sent by God. God is so powerful that He raised Jesus from the dead! What great power! What a great calling!

**Paul’s Beliefs (1:3-5)**

It is important to know the truth so you do not believe a lie. Paul is telling the truth about God. The first truth is that God “raised Jesus from the dead” (v. 1). Paul’s blessing tells a second truth. The Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins so we could be saved. God wanted Him to do this. This was God’s idea. It was God’s plan.

These are the truths Paul believed. This is what he taught the new believers. These truths fill his letter to them from beginning to end. These are the truths all Christians must believe. These truths keep us from believing lies. These truths
help us recognize when someone is trying to change the Good News.

Paul finishes his blessing by giving honor to Jesus. Why should we honor Jesus? We should do this because of Jesus’ work for us on the cross. He also obeyed God. This is also a good reason to give Him honor. That honor is His forever.

Paul’s Concern (1:6-10)

Paul’s letters normally follow a pattern. He tells who is writing the letter. He tells who is receiving the letter. He writes a blessing for the reader. Next he writes a thanks to God. Then he writes the reason for the letter. In this letter, the pattern is different. Paul does not write a thanks to God. After the blessing he goes straight to his reason for writing. He has great concern for these new believers.

Paul was surprised that these Christians had turned away from Christ. Why had they listened to the lies of others so soon? He used strong words against people would lead them the wrong way. He used strong words against anyone who would preach lies.

Only Jesus saves us. Acts 4:12 says, “There is no way to be saved from the punishment of sin through anyone else. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved.”

There is only one way to be saved. In Ephesians Paul says, “For by His loving-favor you have been saved from the punishment of sin through faith. It is not by anything you have done. It is a gift of God. It is not given to you because you worked for it. If you could work for it, you would be proud” (Ephesians 2:8-9). We can not work to be saved. This is the lie of many other religions. This is the lie that others were telling the new Christians. Paul’s concern was to know and preach the true Good News. The believers should not listen to anyone who preached something else.

Paul did not want to please people. He wanted to please God in all that he said and did. Working to be saved is the wrong way to understand the Good News. Disobeying God because He will forgive us is also wrong. That is not the right way to understand the Good News. We are saved by loving-favor (grace) through faith in Jesus plus nothing.
Galatians 1:1-10

1 This letter is from Paul. I am a missionary sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father. Who raised Jesus from the dead. I am not sent by men or by any one man.

2 All the Christians join me in writing to you who are in the churches in the country of Galatia.

3 May you have loving-favor and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 He gave Himself to die for our sins. He did this so we could be saved from this sinful world. This is what God wanted Him to do.

5 May He have all the honor forever. Let it be so.

6 I am surprised you are leaving Christ so soon. You were chosen through His loving-favor. But now you are turning and listening to another kind of good news.

7 No! There is not another kind of good news. There are some who would like to lead you in the wrong way. They want to change the Good News about Christ.

8 Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach another kind of good news to you that is not the one we preached, let him be cursed.

9 As we said before, I will say it again. If any man is preaching another good news to you which is not the one you have received, let him be cursed.

10 Do you think I am trying to get the favor of men, or of God? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant owned by Christ.

Acts 22:17-21

17 "I came back to Jerusalem. When I was praying in the house of God, I had a dream.

18 I saw Him as He said to me, 'Get out of Jerusalem! They will not listen to you when you tell them about Me!'

19 I said, 'Lord, they know I took Christians out of every Jewish place of worship. I had them beaten and put in prison.

20 Also when Stephen was killed, I stood there and watched them throw stones at him. Those who threw the stones had me watch their coats.'

21 The Lord said to me, 'Go! I will send you far away to the people who are not Jews.' "
The Good News Makes a Difference

When I was five years old, my mother asked me a question. She asked what I wanted to be when I grew up. I told her I wanted to be a teacher or a missionary. She wrote it down in a special book about my school years. Later, I was in a special group at church called *Girls in Action*. I memorized verses from the Bible. I learned about missionaries in many different countries. I thought some day I might be a missionary.

In college, I heard a missionary talk about her work. As I listened, I felt God calling me to do missionary work that summer. I felt a strong calling. I had a strong thought to go talk to her. I had a strong thought to sign up for a summer mission trip. My heart beat faster, and I knew I needed to talk to her.

I went to Japan in the summer of 1976. It was amazing! I knew everyday that I was doing what God called me to do. I was at a church where people were learning about Jesus. I was teaching English there. When I came home I went to a mission meeting called *Urbana*. Many missionaries and college students were there. Again I felt God calling me. He called me to do mission work after college. This was God’s call for my life.

Now I teach English in my church as mission work. I teach people from all over the world. I also teach the teachers! I do this so more people can do mission work. More workers means we can teach more people. Those who learn English also learn about Jesus. I have been on missionary trips to other countries. I am a teacher and a missionary. God planned this before I was born!

**Bible Text**

Galatians 1:11-24

**Memory Verse**

“But God chose me before I was born. By His loving-favor He called me to work for Him.”

(Galatians 1:15)

**Word List**

*fool*: trick or make someone believe something that is not true

*amazed*: felt great surprise or wonder

*prepared*: got ready or did what was needed to be ready

*message*: an important idea or news that one person gives to another
Who Gave the Good News? (1:11-12)

Paul was a special missionary called by God. Jesus had special followers while He lived here on earth. They traveled with Him. He taught them many things. After Jesus returned to heaven, these followers became special missionaries. Jesus sent them to teach people all He had taught them. Some of them wrote books to teach what they had learned. Those books are in the New Testament. Paul wanted everyone to understand that he was also one of the special missionaries. Those who were teaching bad news were saying wrong things about Paul. They said Paul was not a special follower of Jesus or a missionary sent by God.

Paul wanted everyone to know the truth about the Good News. It was not a story that some person made up to fool people. It was not a story that Paul learned from any person. The Good News came from Jesus Christ. Jesus came to Paul and showed it to him (see Acts 22:6-8, 11-15 at the end of the lesson). Paul proved he had seen Jesus and received the Good News. Paul’s new and changed life proved the Good News is from God.

Before God’s Call (1:13-16a)

The Good News changed Paul’s life. Before God’s call everything was different for Paul. His name was different. His name was Saul. He did everything he could to hurt Christians. He believed they were telling lies against God. He worked against Jesus, and he wanted to destroy the Church. This was his old life.

Then Jesus came and spoke to him. Everything changed. Paul stopped hurting Christians. He believed the Christian Good News came from God. He worked for Jesus. He helped build the

Things to Think About

1. How does the Good News make a difference in your life?

2. Who do you know who needs the Good News in their life?

3. What is God’s call in your life? Do you know? Have you asked God?

4. How has God prepared you for His call?

5. Who has helped you to understand God’s call?
Following God’s Call (1:21-24)

When Paul left Jerusalem, he went to other countries. He preached to people who were not Jews. Saul was Paul’s Jewish name. He became Paul after he began preaching to people who were not Jews. The Good News made a big difference in Paul’s life. The people in Judea saw this difference and thanked God. They did not doubt Paul’s call or message.

Everyone Christian has an important call from God. Christians everywhere need to follow God’s call in their lives. Each call is different for each person. God calls us to share the Good News. He calls us to tell the difference it has made in our lives. We know this because of Jesus’ words last words to his special helpers. “Go and make followers of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19).

It is important to obey this command. Sharing Jesus with others is part of God’s call on our lives. Each of us should follow God’s plan for us. We need to study. We need to pray. We need to find God’s call in our lives. We need to follow God’s call. We are each a part of God’s loving plan for the world.

After God’s Call (1:16b-20)

Paul had a call from God. He felt no need to talk to any person about it. He went to a desert area south of Damascus. He went there alone to study and pray. He prepared for the work God had called him to do. Then he went back to Damascus.

The special missionaries were Christian leaders in Jerusalem. Many people there doubted Paul. They said he got his message from these leaders. However, Paul preached this message before he ever went to Jerusalem. He did not go there for three years. Paul proved his call and message were from God. This was the truth, not a lie.
**Galatians 1:11-24**

11 Christian brothers, I want you to know the Good News I preached to you was not made by man.

12 I did not receive it from man. No one taught it to me. I received it from Jesus Christ as He showed it to me.

13 You have heard of my old life when I followed the Jewish religion. I made it as hard as I could for the Christians and did everything I could to destroy the Christian church.

14 I had learned more about the Jewish religion than many of the Jews my age. I had a much stronger desire than they to follow the ways of our early fathers.

15 But God chose me before I was born. By His loving-favor He called me to work for Him.

16 His Son was to be seen in me. He did this so I could preach about Christ to the people who are not Jews. When this happened, I did not talk to men.

17 I did not even go to Jerusalem to talk to those who were missionaries before me. Instead, I went to the country of Arabia. Later I returned to the city of Damascus.

18 Three years later I went to Jerusalem to meet Peter. I stayed with him fifteen days.

19 I did not see any of the other missionaries except James, the Lord's brother.

20 I am writing the truth. God knows I am not lying.

21 I went from Jerusalem to the countries of Syria and Cilicia.

22 None of the Christians in the churches in the country of Judea had ever seen me.

23 The only thing they heard was, "The one who tried to destroy the Christian church is now preaching the Good News!"

24 And they gave thanks to God because of me.

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**Acts 22:6-8, 11-15**

6 "I was near Damascus. All at once, about noon, I saw a bright light from heaven shining around me.

7 I fell to the ground. A voice said to me, 'Saul, Saul, why do you work so hard against Me?'

8 I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, the One you are working against.'

11 "I could not see because of the bright light. Those who were with me had to lead me by the hand until we came to Damascus.

12 Ananias lived there. He obeyed the Law and was respected by all the Jews.

13 He came and stood near me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' At once I was able to see him.

14 Then Ananias said, 'The God of our fathers chose you to know what He wants done. He chose you to see Jesus Christ, the One Right with God, and to hear His voice.

15 You are to tell all men what you have seen and heard.
United Because of the Good News

The word **united** makes me think about a mission trip in 2000. Twelve of us taught English in the same place. We were a team of teachers. We taught about American holidays. We taught English words and meanings. We taught how to say those words. This was interesting and helpful to our students. We each taught a different class, but we all had the same message.

It was the Good News that united us. We wanted our students to hear and believe the Good News. We taught this message during our free time in the evenings. The students learned that the Good News is the same no matter who teaches it. The message did not change. We were united in our message and in our love for the students. We worked together as a team.

God worked in a great way that summer because of our united spirit. The Holy Spirit worked in the lives of our students. More than 100 of them became followers of Jesus. This is how God works if we are united. This is what happens when we each do what He has called us to do.

**Paul’s Trip to Jerusalem (2:1-6)**

God told Paul to take a trip to Jerusalem. God showed him this in a special way. It does not say how God showed him. God had showed him the Good News through a bright light and Jesus’ voice (Acts 9). God had showed him his calling through a Christian man’s words (Acts 9:17). God had showed him where to preach in a dream (Acts 16:9). God had showed him when to
3. How has the united Church made a difference in your life?

4. Have you ever seen a church divided? What happened?

**Note of Interest**

A phrase is a group of words. The phrase *the people who are not Jews* is used four times in today’s verses. This phrase is used many times in the Book of Galatians. In many other Bibles, one word is used in place of this phrase. That word is *Gentiles*. This word means *the nations*. Gentiles are any people who are not Jews. Another phrase that means the same thing is *other nations*. This phrase is used in this lesson. It will also be used in later lessons.

stop preaching. God showed Paul when it was time to leave. He showed Paul in a dream while he was praying (Acts 22:17-21). God showed Paul what He wanted him to do in many different ways.

God still shows Christians what He wants them to do today. I asked God to show me what I should do before the mission trip in 2000. I prayed and prayed and watched and listened. One night I was confused. I asked God to show me what He wanted me to do. I took a walk and talked to Him. As I was walking, I saw a post card on the sidewalk. The words on it had an important meaning to me. I cried. I knew God had heard me. God had put this card in my path to give me an answer. The answer was this: Go! These kinds of things do not happen often, but God always answers. When we ask Him what to do, He answers us. His answer often comes when reading the Bible.

Paul, Barnabas, and Titus took a trip to Jerusalem. This happened fourteen years after Paul became a missionary. Some people believe this is the same trip described in Acts 15. It may a different trip. We are not sure. However, the ideas Paul talks about here are the ones in Acts 15 (see verses at the end of this lesson). Both of these chapters tell about becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. What does a person have to do to become a Christian? The answer for Paul and the leaders in Jerusalem were the same. A person becomes a Christian by faith in Jesus plus nothing. This is the Good News. Titus, a Greek, did not have to become a Jew.

Other people came to the meeting. They were not **invited**. These may be people from the same group that Paul talked about
earlier (Galatians 1:7). They had a false idea. They were telling people that faith in Jesus was not enough. They said people from other nations must become Jews and follow the Law. They were adding to the Good News. They said a person becomes a Christian by faith in Jesus plus becoming a Jew and obeying the Law. This was false.

The Good News is the truth that united the Jews and other nations. It makes no difference how important a person seems to be. It makes no difference where a person is born. It makes no difference what God calls a person to do. He may call one person to do a certain thing. He may call another person to do something else. All followers of Jesus are the same to God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Happened Because of Paul’s Trip? (2:7-10)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul was called to preach to the other nations. Peter was called to preach to the Jews. These two groups did not like each other. They would not even eat together. Acts 15 tells us about the leaders in Jerusalem. They wanted believers in other nations to act a certain way. They wanted them to do stop doing things that would</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Galatians 2:1-10

1 Fourteen years later I went again to Jerusalem. This time I took Barnabas. Titus went with us also.
2 God showed me in a special way I should go. I spoke to them about the Good News that I preach among the people who are not Jews. First of all, I talked alone to the important church leaders. I wanted them to know what I was preaching. I did not want that which I was doing or would be doing to be wasted.
3 Titus was with me. Even being a Greek, he did not have to go through the religious act of becoming a Jew.
4 Some men who called themselves Christians asked about this. They got in our meeting without being asked. They came there to find out how free we are who belong to Christ. They tried to get us to be chained to the Law.
5 But we did not listen to them or do what they wanted us to do so the truth of the Good News might be yours.
6 Those who seemed to be important church leaders did not help me. They did not teach me anything new. What they were, I do not care. God looks on us all as being the same.
7 Anyway, they saw how I had been given the work of preaching the Good News to the people who are not Jews, as Peter had been given the work of preaching the Good News to the Jews.
8 For God helped Peter work with the Jews. He also helped me work with those who are not Jews.

9 James and Peter and John were thought of as being the head church leaders. They could see that God's loving-favor had been given to me. Barnabas and I were joined together with them by shaking hands. Then we were sent off to work with the people who are not Jews. They were to work with the Jews.
10 They asked us to do only one thing. We were to remember to help poor people. I think this is important also.

Acts 15:4, 7, 11, 28-29

4 When they got to Jerusalem, the church and the missionaries and the church leaders were glad to see them. Paul and Barnabas told them what God had done through them.
7 After a long time of much talking, Peter got up and said to them, "Brothers, you know in the early days God was pleased to use me to preach the Good News to the people who are not Jews so they might put their trust in Christ.
11 We believe it is by the loving-favor of the Lord Jesus that we are saved. They are saved from the punishment of sin the same way."
28 It pleased the Holy Spirit and us to ask you to do nothing more than these things that have to be done.
29 You are to keep away from everything that is given to gods. Do not eat blood or meat from animals that have been killed in ways against the Law. Keep away from sex sins. If you keep yourselves free from these things you will do well. Good-bye."
Our family moved to our current home eighteen years ago. We quickly joined a church in our city. Most of the members were white and from our area. One Sunday our Bible study class was talking about a new song. The words to the song talked about people who have different colors of skin. One lady said she hated the song. She said she would never let her child marry a person of a different race. She asked me if I would let my child marry a person of a different race. Everyone was waiting for my answer. I knew that in our area people used to be segregated because of race. This lady was showing that there were still strong feelings about race. Many people agreed. They felt that people from different races should not mix.

I had to decide what to say. I had to tell the truth. God sees all of us as equal. I said, “Yes I would, if that person was nice and was a Christian.” Most did not like my answer. I was surprised. The area had not been segregated for a long time. Still, some people’s attitudes had not changed. Change is very difficult for people. This is true for people everywhere.

**The Problem (2:11-13)**

God sees all believers as equal. Even so, the Jews did not mix with people from other nations. They segregated themselves from anyone who was not Jewish. They had laws against doing things with people from other nations. Something similar happened in the history of the United States. In our country, the South once had laws that segregated people.
Things needed to change for the Christians. The Jewish Christians had to accept Christians who were not Jews. They needed to accept Christians from other nations as their brothers and sisters in Christ.

God showed Peter a special waking dream. He wanted to teach Peter something important. In Jesus, Jews and Christians from other nations were equal (Acts 10). Peter needed to learn this. After seeing this special dream, Peter agreed with Paul. He agreed that all Christians were equal. He ate with the people who were not Jews. He had made the change.

Then something happened. Some leaders came from Jerusalem. These leaders had added to the Good News. They believed all Christians must become Jews and follow the Law. When they came from Jerusalem, Peter changed the way he was acting. Peter stopped eating with people who were not Jews. He segregated himself from them. He went back to the old laws of the Jews. He was afraid of what the Jewish leaders might think. He chose to sit at a different table. He acted like the believers who were not Jews were not equal in Jesus. This was a problem. Peter was acting differently than what he had said he believed.

Peter was a leader, and other Jewish believers followed him. Barnabas, Paul’s closest missionary friend, made the same choice. Leaders can not act wrong because they fear what others will think. Leaders must stand against this kind of fear. Peter did not act like a good leader. Paul had to be the good leader.

Paul had to say in front of everyone that Peter was wrong. He spoke strong words. It was important. The Jewish believers needed to know their actions were wrong. Paul helped everyone

Things to Think About
1. Can you tell about a time when you had to make a choice to say and do the right thing? Or say and do what others wanted you to? What did you choose? Why?

2. Can you tell about a time when you or someone you know were not treated as equal?

3. Are some people segregated in any way where you come from? How did that happen?

4. Why did Peter stop eating with those from other nations?

5. Why did Paul use strong words with Peter in front of everyone?

6. What is the big lesson Peter needed to learn from this event? What did you learn?
Some people say this is a problem. They think this means can keep doing more wrong things and never stop acting like sinners. Is this true? Paul’s answer is strong: “No! Never!” (v. 17). Jesus gives believers the power to choose not to sin. We fail when we try to follow the Law in our own power. The Law shows us our sin.

As a child, my mom once told me not to eat a piece of candy. After she said that, I wanted it even more! If I ate it, I would be disobeying. I would be sinning. The same happens when we try to follow God’s laws. If we could keep the Law by ourselves, Jesus didn’t need to die. Jesus died to make us right with God. When we follow Jesus we have power to do right.

Christians also follow Jesus in another way. He died in our place to pay for our sins. This principle was wrong. Everyone had to be reminded of the truth. People are not made right with God by obeying the Law.

### The Principle (2:14-16)

How is a person made right with God? This was the important question behind the problem with Peter. Jewish Christians needed to answer this question to make the right choice. The truth of the Good News helped them answer this question. The Good News tells how to be right with God. People are made right with God by putting their trust in Jesus Christ.

Peter, Barnabas and the other Jewish believers had not been honest. They had been united and eating at one table as God’s church. Now they pretended to be following Jewish laws of segregation. They acted like obeying the Law was what made people right with God. This principle was wrong. Everyone had to be reminded of the truth. People are not made right with God by obeying the Law.

### The Payment (2:17-21)

Jesus made the payment for our sins by dying on the cross. He paid for every sin we have done in the past. He also paid for every sin we will do in the future.

The Law does not have power over us. Sin does not have power over us. Jesus’ power lives in us when we follow Him. Jesus’ power is for all who trust in Him.
Galatians 2:11-21

11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to stand up against him because he was guilty.

12 Peter had been eating with the people who are not Jews. But after some men came who had been with James, he kept away from them. He was afraid of those who believe in the religious act of becoming a Jew.

13 Then the rest of the Jews followed him because they were afraid to do what they knew they should do. Even Barnabas was fooled by those who pretended to be someone they were not.

14 When I saw they were not honest about the truth of the Good News, I spoke to Peter in front of them all. I said, "If you are a Jew, but live like the people who are not Jews, why do you make the people who are not Jews live like the Jews?"

15 You and I were born Jews. We were not sinners from among the people who are not Jews.

16 Even so, we know we cannot become right with God by obeying the Law. A man is made right with God by putting his trust in Jesus Christ. For that reason, we have put our trust in Jesus Christ also. We have been made right with God because of our faith in Christ and not by obeying the Law. No man can be made right with God by obeying the Law.

17 As we try to become right with God by what Christ has done for us, what if we find we are sinners also? Does that mean Christ makes us sinners? No! Never!

18 But if I work toward being made right with God by keeping the Law, then I make myself a sinner.

19 The Law has no power over me. I am dead to the Law. Now I can live for God.

20 I have been put up on the cross to die with Christ. I no longer live. Christ lives in me. The life I now live in this body, I live by putting my trust in the Son of God. He was the One Who loved me and gave Himself for me.

21 I say that we are not to put aside the loving-favor of God. If we could be made right with God by keeping the Law, then Christ died for nothing.
It’s All Faith

A person reading the Bible for the first time has many questions. I know a college student in China. We have been writing emails to each other for over a year. She promised me that she would read the Bible every day. She did and had many interesting questions. Here are just a few: Many names in Genesis are hard to say, is it important to know them? If a person does not believe God is real or God is all-powerful, but he acts like a Christian, is it good or not? Do Christians continue to celebrate Jewish holidays? What does Jesus’ story about the boss mean? The answers to some of these questions were easy. Some were not as easy to answer. Her questions made me think. The answers helped her decide to be a follower of Jesus.

Questions are an important way to learn things. They can help us make decisions. Paul asked the Galatians five questions. He wanted them to think about what they believed. He wanted them to understand how they had changed. They had changed what they were thinking about the Good News.

**Questions About God’s Plan (3:1-5)**

“What strange powers are trying to lead you from the way of faith in Christ?” (v. 1). The Galatians had accepted the Good News. Now they were being led away from the truth.

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit by keeping the Law? Or did you receive Him by hearing about Christ?” (v. 2). This is one question in two parts. Paul wanted them to understand what gave them the Holy Spirit. Was it their actions or their faith? He knew...
the answer, but he wanted them to think about it. They did not earn the Spirit with their actions (Acts 2). They received the Spirit because of their faith. The new believers who were not Jews did not earn the Spirit (Acts 10). The Spirit is a gift. They all received the Holy Spirit by believing what they heard.

“How foolish can you be? ...Do you think you are going to become better Christians by your old way of worship?” (v. 3). This is another question in two parts. Paul asked them to think about how they grow as Christians. They became believers by faith. They received the Spirit by faith. How could they grow and become better Christians except by faith? Their thinking was foolish. It’s all faith, nothing more and nothing else.

“Was this all of no use?” (v. 4). Paul asked them to remember everything that had happened. How had they suffered? We are not sure, but Christians were suffering because of their faith. Others did not understand and did terrible things to Christians. Paul asked them if everything had been a waste.

“Does He do it because you do what the Law says or because you hear and believe the truth?” (v. 5). This question is like the second one. Paul reminded them of what God did. God did miracles. They did not earn them. They had faith. The miracles they saw were a gift.

All these questions helped them. These questions also help us think about God’s plan. We become followers of Jesus by faith. We receive the Holy Spirit by faith. We grow as Christians by faith. We can suffer anything if we have faith. We receive miracles by faith. Faith in Jesus is the only way to follow God’s plan for our lives.

**Things to Think About**

1. What have you heard others say about working to be saved or going to heaven?

2. Why did Paul choose Abraham as an example of being right with God by faith?

3. How can you use the principle found in Galatians 3:28 with the people you know?

4. Why do you think so many people want to do things to make themselves right with God?

5. What questions do you have about the “by faith” plan?
An Example of God’s Plan (3:6-9, 11, 13a, 14-18)
Paul did not give the answers to his questions. He helped the Galatians find the answers by telling of Abraham. Abraham is the father of the Jewish nation. He lived more than 400 years before God gave the Law to Moses. The Book of Genesis tells about Abraham. “Then Abram believed in the Lord, and that made him right with God” (Genesis 15:6). Everyone becomes right with God in the same way.

Abraham did nothing to make himself right with God. He did not earn it. He did not follow the Law. God had not even given it yet! Abraham’s faith in the promise made him right with God (v. 16). Trusting God makes people children of Abraham, not their Jewish blood. Abraham’s faith is an example that gives the answer to Paul’s questions.

Paul talks about Genesis 12:3. This verse proves that God saves people in other nations. He saves them if they have faith in Him. This is the first time God gave the Good News. It was God’s plan to send Jesus through the family of Abraham. All believers can rejoice in God’s plan.

Paul explains that faith is better than the Law. If you follow the Law, you must always do everything it says. This is not possible. It is possible to have faith. Paul shows verses from the Old Testament to prove what he says. Paul did not want the Galatians to be fooled. Faith frees Christians from the Law. Jesus Christ freed Christians by paying the punishment for sin. Now, all the good things of God are for everyone who trusts in Christ. The promise made to Abraham came true in Jesus Christ.

What Happened Because of God’s Plan (3:26-29)
Those who trust in Christ are the true children of God. Those who are baptized show they belong to Christ. This was a big change for the Jews. They trusted in their Jewish blood to save them. But this was never God’s plan. This plan was made by people who did not understand God’s promise. The promise of God is for those who trust in the blood of Jesus.

God’s wonderful plan is for all people. All people are not the same. But in Christ all people have equal value and worth. In Christ all people are one. God’s promise is for all who put their faith in Christ.
Galatians 3:1-9, 11, 13a, 14-18, 26-29
1 You foolish Galatians! What strange powers are trying to lead you from the way of faith in Christ? We made it plain for you to see that Jesus Christ was put on a cross to die.
2 There is one thing I want to know. Did you receive the Holy Spirit by keeping the Law? Or did you receive Him by hearing about Christ?
3 How foolish can you be? You started the Christian life by the Holy Spirit. Do you think you are going to become better Christians by your old way of worship?
4 You suffered so much because of the Good News you received. Was this all of no use?
5 He gave you the Holy Spirit and did powerful works among you. Does He do it because you do what the Law says or because you hear and believe the truth?
6 It was the same with Abraham. He put his trust in God. This made Abraham right with God.
7 Be sure to remember that all men who put their trust in God are the sons of Abraham.
8 The Holy Writings said long ago that God would save the people who are not Jews from the punishment of sin also. Before this time the Holy Writings gave the Good News to Abraham in these words, "All nations will be happy because of you." (Genesis 12:3)
9 So then, all those who have faith will be happy, along with Abraham who had faith.
10 No one is made right with God by doing what the Law says. For, "The man right with God will live by faith." (Habakkuk 2:4)
11 Christ bought us with His blood and made us free from the Law. In that way, the Law could not punish us. Christ did this by carrying the load and by being punished instead of us...
14 Because of the price Christ Jesus paid, the good things that came to Abraham might come to the people who are not Jews. And by putting our trust in Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit He has promised.
15 Christian brothers, let me show you what this means. If two men agree to something and sign their names on a paper promising to stay true to what they agree, it cannot be changed.
16 Now the promise was made to Abraham and to his son. He does not say, "And to sons," speaking of many. But instead, "And to your Son," which means Christ.
17 This is what I am saying: The Law which came 430 years later could not change the promise. The promise had already been made by God. The Law could not put that promise aside.
18 If it had been possible to be saved from the punishment of sin by obeying the Law, the promise God gave Abraham would be worth nothing. But since it is not possible to be saved by obeying the Law, the promise God gave Abraham is worth everything.
26 You are now children of God because you have put your trust in Christ Jesus.
27 All of you who have been baptized to show you belong to Christ have become like Christ.
28 God does not see you as a Jew or as a Greek. He does not see you as a person sold to work or as a person free to work. He does not see you as a man or as a woman. You are all one in Christ.
29 If you belong to Christ, then you have become the true children of Abraham. What God promised to him is now yours.
Set Free to Be God’s Children

My father was an alcoholic. Alcohol had power in his life for more than ten years. Christ made him free from this problem in his life. He was 37 years old when he became a Christian. I was 13 when he gave his life to Christ. It was a wonderful day for us all. His decision made a big difference in his life and in our family. The Holy Spirit gave him the power to stop drinking alcohol. God changed him from the inside. He was set free to be God’s child.

As a teenager I saw a movie about an alcoholic woman. She went to a special place where people helped her stop drinking alcohol. When the people thought she was cured, they sent her home. The movie showed how she slowly returned to drinking alcohol. This movie made me afraid. I feared my father would go back to drinking alcohol again. How terrible if he had returned to being a servant owned by alcohol! How terrible to become a servant again after being freed from any sin! Why would anyone do this?

Before Christ Comes (4:1-3)

In Jewish families a young child was not free. A child was the same as a servant owned by the family. The child had to obey parents, teachers and others. When the child grew to be twelve years old, things changed. Now this child could own the riches of his family.

Paul says that the history of the Jews is like a Jewish child. Before Christ came, they were not free. They were like
servants owned by the Law. They had to obey the Law. The Law was like a teacher to help them learn about God. It helped them know what was right and what was wrong. It also had power over their lives. When Christ came, everything changed. Now the Jews, the Galatians, and anyone who followed Christ was free. They were not servants owned by the Law. They had the power and the riches of heaven in Christ.

This is true for people today. Many things can have power over our lives. Money can have power over us. Drugs or alcohol can have power over us. Other people can have power over us. Even religious rules can have power over us. If these kinds of things have power over us, we are like young children. Only Christ should have power over us. Then everything will change. He loves us and died for us. We will own what God owns.

**Things to Think About**

1. Who do you know who has tried to stop doing wrong things or change their lives in some way? What happened?

2. In what ways was it the right time when Jesus came?

3. Why did Jesus Christ have to be both God and human?

4. What or who have you worshiped in your life? What or who do you worship now?

**After Christ Comes (4:4-7)**

Everything changed after Christ came. He came “at the right time” (v. 4). This was a special time. There was peace in the world because the Romans ruled all the lands. People could travel by roads that the Romans built. Most people could speak the Greek language. Jewish places of worship existed in many places. At this time, many people were also acting in wrong ways. They were looking for answers. They were looking for something or someone to help them. Too many things had power over their lives. This was the right time in history for Christ to come. When the time was right, God sent Jesus to be born.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus is God. Mary, a Jewish woman, gave birth to Jesus. Jesus is human. Jesus was
both God and human. What if He was God but not human? His death would have done nothing for people. What if He was human but not God? His death would have just another human dying.

Christ always obeyed God. In this way He was under the Law. He never sinned. This, too, is an important part of God’s plan. God planned for Christ to “buy [us] with His blood” (v. 5). Christ made it possible for us to “become the sons of God” (v. 5). We are free from anything that might have power over our lives.

God made everything and has all power. It is wonderful to call him “Father!” (v. 6). We receive God’s Spirit when we are saved. We are saved by faith in Jesus plus nothing. As His children we have everything He has promised. We are as rich as God! We are not rich in money but in all things that are important. We are free to worship God only.

**Why Turn Back? (4:8-10)**

The alcoholic woman in the movie is like many real alcoholics. They worship the false god of alcohol. They try to change. Many times they turn away from alcohol. They fail because they try to do what is right in their own power. My father was changed from the inside by Jesus. Christ gave him the power be free from alcohol and worship God only. Why turn back?

The Galatians worshiped false gods, or idols, before they knew the only true God. The Jews worshiped the Law before they came to know Jesus Christ. Everyone worships something in their lives. This is how God has made us. Some people even worship themselves. We are only free when we worship God through Jesus Christ. After that, there is no reason to turn back. There is no reason to worship something else.

**Be free! (5:1)**

We are free. The **goal** of every follower of Jesus should be to stay free. We can trust God to keep us free. We need not turn back to our sin. We need not trust in religious rules or ourselves. Jesus saves and frees!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Galatians 4:1-10; 5:1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Let me say this another way. A young child who will get all the riches of his family is not different from a servant who is owned by the family. And yet the young child owns everything.</td>
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<td>2 While he is young, he is cared for by men his father trusts. These men tell the child what he can and cannot do. The child cannot do what he wants to do until he has become a certain age.</td>
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<td>3 We were as children also held by the Law. We obeyed the Law in our religious worship.</td>
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<td>4 But at the right time, God sent His Son. A woman gave birth to Him under the Law.</td>
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<td>5 This all happened so He could buy with His blood and make free all those who were held by the Law. Then we might become the sons of God.</td>
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<td>6 Because you are the sons of God, He has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. The Spirit cries, &quot;Father!&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 So now you are no longer a servant who is owned by someone. You are a son. If you are a son, then you will receive what God has promised through Christ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 During the time when you did not know God, you worshiped false gods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 But now that you know God, or should I say that you are known by God, why do you turn back again to the weak old Law? Why do you want to do those religious acts of worship that will keep you from being free? Why do you want to be held under the power of the Law again?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 You do special things on certain days and months and years and times of the year.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Galatians 5:1</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Christ made us free. Stay that way. Do not get chained all over again in the Law and its kind of religious worship.</td>
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THE GOOD NEWS IN LIFE

Life has its problems and joys. It can be hard and sad. It can be wonderful and happy. How does the Good News make a difference in the believer’s life? How did the Good News make a difference for the Jews? How did the Good News make a difference for people who worshiped idols? How did the Good News make a difference for people who had never heard it before?

Sulyn, a Chinese college student, asked me an important question. She asked if she could live like a Christian without believing in Jesus. She said her friends thought this was a good idea. I told her it is not possible. To live the Christian life, we need God’s power to change us. He changes us on the inside. Then we show changes on the outside. She believed and her life changed.

True change is not easy. We can not make a true change in our lives by ourselves. We need the power of the Holy Spirit help us change. We need to walk by the Spirit. That is how we keep living a life that pleases God. This life comes from being a new person in Christ. When our lives change, we want new things. We want to learn and grow with other Christians. We want to be members of a good church. Paul tells what life in a good church looks like.
Walk by the Spirit

*Just take it one step at a time.* That is a common saying in English. This is wise advice to someone who has a difficult problem. It means that a person should not try to see too far in the future. In hard times, a person should just do one thing at a time. Do the next thing that needs to be done. Then do the next thing and the next. Sometimes a person is not able to plan ahead. Sometimes a person can not see how things will ever get better. Taking one step at a time is good advice for difficult times.

Paul’s advice is better than that. There is no need to take those steps alone. The Holy Spirit will lead the believer’s steps if the believer will follow. Think of it this way. Imagine a marching band with the Holy Spirit as the leader. We must take many steps in different areas of our lives. We can follow the Holy Spirit just like a band follows their leader.

Our daughter, Rachel, was in a marching band. We were always amazed how well they could all play and march. They stepped together in lines while making beautiful music. Each member had worked hard to know the music and the steps. It was their leader who kept them all together. Following the lead of the Holy Spirit is important. It will keep our steps in line with God’s plan. How do we let the Holy Spirit lead in each step?

**Freedom and Love (5:13-15)**

The Holy Spirit leads in steps of freedom and love. The Holy Spirit leads us to be free from sin. He leads us to love all people. Freedom from sin may be hard to understand. It does not
mean we should act any way we want. It does not mean freedom to sin or please the old self. The old self is the believer’s life before Christ changed it. The old self did not desire to know or please Christ. Christ died on the cross to forgive our sins. He paid for a new life led by the Spirit. A person is made new by faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing. This is the first step. Then that person is free to love and help others.

Jesus told about this kind of love in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). This story is about a man who showed love to a stranger. He helped the stranger when he was hurt. Jesus said a stranger from another country was his neighbor. This man from Samaria obeyed the whole Law by loving his neighbor. This is an example of freedom to love.

Hurting people and making it hard for others is not love. It is an example of pleasing the old self. Sometimes it is easier to hurt than to help. Sometimes it is easier to choose wrong things than right things. The Holy Spirit gives Christians the power to choose right things. This is the power to love and help others.

**The Sinful Old Self (5:16-18)**

Paul says we must make a choice. We can choose to be led by the Holy Spirit. Or we can choose to please the sinful old self. These choices are **opposites**. We can only choose one of these.

It is wrong to please the sinful old self. It is easy, but it is wrong. Choosing to please the sinful old self is a step in the wrong way. It is a step out of line.

Choosing to be led by the Holy Spirit is a good step. It is a step in the right way. It takes power away from the Law. It is a
true Christians. The actions produced by the Spirit are called fruit. A healthy fruit tree produces fruit. The kind of fruit a tree produces is important. It tells us what kind of tree it is. A growing Christian also produces fruit. We can know what kind of person someone is by the fruit he produces. A Christian produces the fruit of the Spirit.

Verses 22-23 describe steps that are led by the Spirit. They are good for our bodies. They are good for our relationship with God. They are good for being with others. The fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience (not giving up), being kind, being good, having faith, being gentle, and self-control (being the boss over our own desires). The Law that Paul has been talking about is not against these. There is no law anywhere against these.

When we follow the Spirit, we see others as more important than we are. We see our old selves and sinful desires as dead. We choose not to be proud in a way that hurts others. We choose the freedom to do right. We choose the power of the Holy Spirit. He leads us step by step. Step by step is walking. This is how we walk by the Spirit.

Acts of the Sinful Old Self (5:19-21)
Paul lists our actions when we choose to please the sinful old self. These actions are against our own bodies. They are against God and against others. There are other sinful acts that are not on the list.

There are some who choose to act this way all the time. Paul tells us that their actions show who they are. Their actions show that they do not have new life in the Spirit. They have not taken the first step. They are not free from sin. They will not be with God.

If a Christian acts this way, God can forgive him. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.” Then we can choose to be led by the Spirit.

Acts of the Spirit (5:22-26)
Paul makes a different list. It tells our actions when we choose to follow the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in the lives of all step in line with God’s plan. We have to choose how we want to act. Paul tells us what actions come with each choice.
**Galatians 5:13-26**

13 Christian brother, you were chosen to be free. Be careful that you do not please your old selves by sinning because you are free. Live this free life by loving and helping others.

14 You obey the whole Law when you do this one thing, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." (Leviticus 19:18)

15 But if you hurt and make it hard for each other, watch out or you may be destroyed by each other.

16 I say this to you: Let the Holy Spirit lead you in each step. Then you will not please your sinful old selves.

17 The things our old selves want to do are against what the Holy Spirit wants. The Holy Spirit does not agree with what our sinful old selves want. These two are against each other. So you cannot do what you want to do.

18 If you let the Holy Spirit lead you, the Law no longer has power over you.

19 The things your sinful old self wants to do are: sex sins, sinful desires, wild living, worshiping false gods, witchcraft, hating, fighting, being jealous, being angry, arguing, dividing into little groups and thinking the other groups are wrong, false teaching,

21 wanting something someone else has, killing other people, using strong drink, wild parties, and all things like these. I told you before and I am telling you again that those who do these things will have no place in the holy nation of God.

22 But the fruit that comes from having the Holy Spirit in our lives is: love, joy, peace, not giving up, being kind, being good, having faith,

23 being gentle, and being the boss over our own desires. The Law is not against these things.

24 Those of us who belong to Christ have nailed our sinful old selves on His cross. Our sinful desires are now dead.

25 If the Holy Spirit is living in us, let us be led by Him in all things.

26 Let us not become proud in ways in which we should not. We must not make hard feelings among ourselves as Christians or make anyone jealous.
Life in a Good Church

A good church has members who love each other. They show this love by what they do. On July 5, 2009, my husband had a heart attack. We have been married over 30 years. In those 30 years, he had never been in the hospital. In a short time, members of our church started praying. They were calling and visiting him. They brought meals to our home after he was out of the hospital. They showed their love by what they did. Some members of our church have lost their jobs. Others have been hurt or sick. We have helped them or visited them, too. This is what life is like in a good church.

Share the Troubles and Problems (6:1-4)

Sometimes life is hard. We choose the wrong way and sin. We still have desires to go the way we know is wrong. We lose our jobs. We have a child who is very sick. A parent or loved one is hurt or dies. Our house burns. We have doubts about God’s love for us. We don’t know how to pray or if God is listening. There are many more hard times like these. These are the times that we need help. We need God’s family, the Church.

Sometimes a person is going the wrong way. Often, we want to help them. We must be careful when we try to help them. We must not start following their ways. We need to “lead that person back into the right way” (v. 2). Sometimes sinful ways can spread from person to person. We must not let that happen. We must help without having pride. Pride makes us weak and open to sin. We must remember we are all sinners. We
must remember that all are saved by faith in Jesus plus nothing. Then we can truly help those who have sinned.

The law Christ asks us to obey is the law of love (Galatians 5:14). The law of love means we will “help each other in troubles and problems” (v. 2). We can welcome back a person who has sinned and is sorry. We can share good advice with those who want to go the wrong way. We can give money or pay rent when someone loses their job. We can babysit for a sick child’s family. We can sit quietly and listen when someone is sad. We can give food, clothes and other things when a house burns. We can help a person who has doubts about God. We can give loving advice and read promises from the Bible. We can pray for all of these. This is what life is like in a good church.

Do Your Own Work (6:5)

It may seem that verse 2 is the opposite of verse 5. It is not. Paul says something similar in 2 Thessalonians 3:10. “When we were with you, we told you that if a man does not work, he should not eat.” This stops people from being lazy and letting others take care of them.

Paul says the same thing in Titus 3:14. “Our people must learn to work hard. They must work for what they need and be able to give to others who need help. Then their lives will not be wasted.” We must work hard when we can. Then we can help others if they need it. This is what life is like in a good church.

Share the Good Things (6:6)

When the members of a church are all working and
helping, they can do much. They can help those who can not work. They can pay those who teach them. The pastor, who teaches everyone in the church, should be paid. Pastors give their time to studying and teaching God’s Word each week.

Many teachers in churches are volunteers. These teachers often get more than they give. They learn so much from their students. The students share their love and lives with their teacher. They get joy from being with them. These are the good things students share with their teachers.

Good churches pay their pastors well. Members give from what God has given them. Churches also give to places that teach pastors. They give new pastors a place to learn and grow. Churches give to missionaries. This is what life is like in a good church.

Share What You Get (6:7-10)

Members of a good church look for ways to share. Members of a good church want to do good. Churches who do good for others often see God work. Our church gave food, clothing and rent money to some people. They were workers from Korea who were having a hard time. All 25 men, women, and children decided to follow Jesus. God did a great work because members of our church showed love.

Paul says we get back what we plant. Paul talks about planting. He is really talking about our actions, the things we do. If we plant or do wrong, we receive bad things. If we plant or do good, we receive good things. We should keep doing good. We should not give up. The right time will come. We will see good things come from what we have planted. This is what life is like in a good church.

Share the Good News (6:14-16)

Paul said he had pride only in the cross of Christ. Telling others about the cross is sharing the Good News. Having faith in Christ plus nothing gives us God’s peace. It gives us all the fruits of the Spirit. Life in a good church is best when we love one another. Jesus said, “If you love each other, all men will know you are My followers” (John 13:35). This is what life is like in a good church!
Galatians 6:1-10,14-16

1 Christian brothers, if a person is found doing some sin, you who are stronger Christians should lead that one back into the right way. Do not be proud as you do it. Watch yourself, because you may be tempted also.

2 Help each other in troubles and problems. This is the kind of law Christ asks us to obey.

3 If anyone thinks he is important when he is nothing, he is fooling himself.

4 Everyone should look at himself and see how he does his own work. Then he can be happy in what he has done. He should not compare himself with his neighbor.

5 Everyone must do his own work.

6 He who is taught God's Word should share the good things he has with his teacher.

7 Do not be fooled. You cannot fool God. A man will get back whatever he plants!

8 If a man does things to please his sinful old self, his soul will be lost. If a man does things to please the Holy Spirit, he will have life that lasts forever.

9 Do not let yourselves get tired of doing good. If we do not give up, we will get what is coming to us at the right time.

10 Because of this, we should do good to everyone. For sure, we should do good to those who belong to Christ.

Galatians 6:14-16

14 I do not want to be proud of anything except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the cross, the ways of this world are dead to me, and I am dead to them.

15 If a person does or does not go through the religious act of becoming a Jew, it is worth nothing. The important thing is to become a new person.

16 Those who follow this way will have God's peace and loving-kindness. They are the people of God.
HEALTHY CHURCH LIFE

Thessalonica was the capital of the country of Macedonia. Paul wrote two letters to the Christians in Thessalonica. This shows how much he and the other missionaries cared for them. Some church members were Jews who became Christians. Some were not Jews. Some had been idol worshipers. Some believed in the One true God before they heard about Jesus. All were new to the faith.

First Thessalonians is the oldest of Paul’s letters in the Bible. Paul’s teachings about life in the church were helpful both then and now. Second Thessalonians was written to continue Paul’s teachings. He wrote to answer questions from the first letter. Both letters are important today, too.

Paul thanked God for such a great church. He helped them understand what God wants in His leaders. The Thessalonians were living in hard times. Paul taught them how important it is to live to please God. He gave them ideas on how to have hope for now and forever. His letters helped them to be a healthy church in hard times. His letters helped them know how to have faith, love, hope and joy. These things make for a healthy life and a healthy church.

Churches are not perfect. People are not perfect. However, our churches and our lives can be good examples for others.
Thank God for Such a Church!

When a young child wants something, a parent may ask, “What do you say?” The answer is either please or thank you. It is important to be polite. Even very young children can learn to say these words. Hannah, my granddaughter, was signing these words before she could say them. Children learn very early to say or sign these words. They often learn this before they are a year old.

It is important to teach children to thank others. It is important to thank people for what they give or do. We should also thank God for what He gives and what He does. It is important to know that God gives us His best. He always does what is best for us. Sometimes this doesn’t seem to be true, but it is. Paul wrote about this in his letter to the Ephesians. He said, “Always give thanks for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). It is important to always give thanks.

Thanksgiving (1:1-2)

Thanksgiving is a holiday in the United States. We have a special meal and say thanks to God. We thank Him for the food and all our blessings. We remember the first Thanksgiving. It was a special meal to thank God for the first harvest in the new land. The winter had been terrible. The cold was bitter and there was not enough food. The people learned to plant in the spring. That fall brought a bigger harvest than they hoped. What a blessing! Later this new land became a country,
the United States of America. The fourth Thursday of November has become a special holiday for giving thanks. Every day in the Christian’s life should be a day for giving thanks. We have so many blessing and reasons for thanksgiving.

Paul thanked God for these Christians three times in this letter (1 Thessalonians 1:2, 2:13, 3:9). He thanked God for them twice in his second letter to them (2 Thessalonians 1:3, 2:13). He gave them a blessing to have God’s loving-favor (grace) and God’s peace.

Sometimes it is easy to forget the good things people have said or done. It is easy to forget the blessings that God has given us. We often forget to live our lives in thanksgiving. It is better to remember all our blessings. It is better to live our lives with thanksgiving to God. Paul and his friends prayed. They gave thanks for the church in Thessalonica.

**Things That Make a Church a Good Example (1:3-8)**

Paul, Silas and Timothy remembered the Thessalonians when they prayed. They gave thanks for these dear friends in Thessalonica. They gave thanks for their works of faith during hard times. They gave thanks for their help and their acts of love. They gave thanks for their hope that never gave up. Faith, love and hope are all blessings from God. Faith, love and hope make a good example to other churches.

Paul called the Thessalonians *brothers* thirteen times in this letter. He did the same thing seven times in his second letter. This was a loving name for both men and women in Paul’s time. It meant they were all in the same family, the family of God.
became good examples. They showed other Christians how to turn away from false Gods (v. 9). They also showed how to give and help others in need (see 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 at the end of this lesson).

This church was a good example because they shared the Word of God with others. They went to their own country and to the country of Greece. They went there to tell the Good News. People everywhere knew about their faith in God (v. 8).

People Who Worship God (1:9-10)

People talk. They tell others about what they have heard. Many times this is not good. This time it was good. Paul was happy that other people talked about this good church. They talked about the Thessalonians who had turned from false gods. They talked about how this church worshiped “the true and living God” (v. 9).

The church in Thessalonica was a good example, but they were not perfect. Next we will learn about ways they could do better. The Thessalonians were living, learning and growing in faith, love, hope, and joy. Paul thanked God for such a church as this one!
1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

1 This letter is from Paul and Silas and Timothy. It is to you, the church, in the city of Thessalonica. You belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May you have His loving-favor and His peace.
2 We thank God for you all the time and pray for you.
3 While praying to God our Father, we always remember your work of faith and your acts of love and your hope that never gives up in our Lord Jesus Christ.
4 Christian brothers, we know God loves you and that He has chosen you.
5 The Good News did not come to you by word only, but with power and through the Holy Spirit. You knew it was true. You also knew how we lived among you. It was for your good.
6 You followed our way of life and the life of the Lord. You suffered from others because of listening to us. But you had the joy that came from the Holy Spirit.
7 Because of your good lives, you are showing all the Christians in the countries of Macedonia and Greece how to live.
8 The Word of the Lord has been spoken by you in the countries of Macedonia and Greece. People everywhere know of your faith in God without our telling them.
9 The people themselves tell us how you received us when we came to you. They talk of how you turned to God from worshiping false gods. Now you worship the true and living God.
10 They tell us how you are waiting for His Son Jesus to come down from heaven. God raised Him from the dead. It is Jesus Who will save us from the anger of God that is coming.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

1 Christian brothers, we want you to know how the loving-favor of God has been shown in the churches in the country of Macedonia.
2 They have been put to the test by much trouble, but they have much joy. They have given much even though they were very poor.
3 They gave as much as they could because they wanted to.
4 They asked from their hearts if they could help the Christians in Jerusalem.
5 It was more than we expected. They gave themselves to the Lord first. Then they gave themselves to us to be used as the Lord wanted.
What God Wants in His Leaders

Leaders are born not made. This is a popular saying.

Another popular saying has a different idea. Leaders are made not born. God tells us in the Bible what leaders should be like. These are leaders of His people, the Church. Every church has a pastor or a leader by another name. Most churches have many leaders because they have many ministries. They lead children’s ministries. They lead men’s ministries. They lead women’s ministries. They lead Bible studies. They lead ministries that help poor people. They lead ministries that help young parents. They lead ministries that help adults who are not married. They lead ministries that teach people to read or speak English. Some leaders are paid. Some leaders are volunteers. God wants all His leaders to have special qualities. Some of these qualities are: honesty, gentleness, faithfulness, kindness and willingness to work hard. Leaders with these qualities should be respected by the Church.

Honesty (2:1-5)

Paul is an example of a great leader. Some people thought Paul was not a good leader. Paul wanted to show he was the kind of leader God wants all leaders to be. Acts 16-17:9 tells what kind of leader Paul was. It is the story of Paul in Philippi and his work in Thessalonica. Paul reminded this church that he was honest in all that he did. He and his friends did the right things when many were against them. They told the truth. They taught
hearts: As used here, the word does not mean the organ in your body, but a word used to talk about what people are really like, who they really are, parts of people which only God can know well.

Things to Think About
1. What other ministries have you seen in a church?
2. Look at verses 3-6. What were the people who worked against Paul and his friends saying about them? Make a list.
3. Are Christian leaders perfect? If not, how can churches choose good leaders?
4. What leader do you know who has all these qualities? List other good qualities you see in that person.
5. What can church members do to show their leaders that they respect and love them?

the Good News for the right reasons. They helped people believe what was true, not what was false. They obeyed God by preaching the Good News with simple, honest words. Their hearts were true and right. They did not preach to make money or get thanks. They were honest preachers of Christ. They were great leaders.

Gentleness (2:6-7)

Paul and his friends were gentle with this church. They did not ask for thanks. They did not ask for any kind of help. They were missionaries who were gentle in what they said and did. What does it mean to be gentle?

Paul used the example of a mother caring for her children. A mother is gentle, but she also needs to teach her children to do right. Children sometimes do wrong. Mothers need to use strong words and acts to teach their children. This shows how much she cares for them. Paul sometimes used strong words to teach others what was right. He was gentle like a good mother with her children. This showed he cared and was a great leader.

Kindness (2:8)

I love you. These are three powerful words! Paul made sure this church knew his feelings for them. He told them. Love is not to keep but to share. Love makes you want to help. Love makes you want to share the Good News. This kind of love comes from God. It makes you ready to give your life for others.

When you give time to serve others, you are giving part of your life. When you give money, you are giving part of your life.
Some have given their whole life by dying to tell the Good News to others. This is happening today, too!

Kindness is given by most pastors and many leaders in the church. This loving care comes from the Lord. Every Christian should show kindness to others. Leaders should be known for this quality. This shows they are the leaders God wants.

Willingness to Work Hard (2:9)

Paul and his friends worked hard. They did not want to cause the Thessalonians money problems. They did not want the church to pay them money they could not afford. Paul was a tent maker. He worked to earn the money he needed for food and clothes. He worked both day and night to earn his money. He also took time to preach and teach.

Paul taught that church workers should be paid (Galatians 6:6). Paul was not changing his teaching by earning his own money. Paul was starting the church in an area with little money. Paul was teaching that whatever we do, we should work hard. Paul taught the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15:58. He said, “Always do your work well for the Lord. You know that whatever you do for Him will not be wasted.” He also taught this in Colossians 3:23. He said, “Whatever work you do, do it with all your heart. Do it for the Lord and not for men.” Great leaders are hard workers.

Faithfulness (2:10-12)

A Christian leader should be faithful from beginning to end. Paul wrote to Timothy at the end of his life. He said, “I have fought a good fight. I have finished the work I was to do. I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). He continued to be faithful to God and to his calling until the end.

Frank Laubach was called to be a leader. He taught people to read. He was still teaching just a few hours before he died. He was 85. He stayed faithful to his calling. He was a great leader.

Respect Leaders (5:12-13)

We respect and love our leaders because God gave them to us. The work they do is good. They show Godly qualities in how they work. This is even better. May God give us these same qualities so we can be examples to others!
1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1 Christian brothers, you know that my visit with you was not wasted.
2 Just before we came to you, we had been in the city of Philippi. You know how they worked against us and made us suffer. But God helped us preach the Good News to you without fear, even while many people hated us and made it hard for us.
3 You remember what we said to you was true. We had no wrong desire in teaching you. We did not try to fool you.
4 God has allowed us to be trusted with the Good News. Because of this, we preach it to please God, not man. God tests and proves our hearts.
5 You know we never used smooth-sounding words. God knows we never tried to get money from you by preaching.
6 We never looked for thanks from men, not from you or from anyone else. But because we were missionaries of Christ, we could have asked you to do much for us.
7 Instead, we were gentle when we came to you. We were like a mother caring for her children.
8 We had such a strong desire to help you that we were happy to give you the Good News. Because we loved you so much, we were ready to give you our own lives also.
9 You remember, Christian brothers, we worked night and day for our food and clothes while we preached the Good News to you. We did not want to make it hard for you.
10 You know, and so does God, how pure and right and without blame we were among you who believe.
11 As a father helps his children, you know how we wanted to help you and give you comfort. We told you with strong words
12 that you should live to please God. He is the One Who chose you to come into His holy nation and to share His shining-greatness.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

12 We ask you, Christian brothers, to respect those who work among you. The Lord has placed them over you and they are your teachers.
13 You must think much of them and love them because of their work. Live in peace with each other.
Live to Please God

Stars often think they have good qualities. They want others to respect them. They want to please people. Many people watch them and talk about them. Some stars are very well known. It is hard for them to live a normal life. They often hide from people to get privacy.

Having good qualities and respect are important. Qualities show who we really are. Respect shows who other people think we are. We should be the same person that people think we are.

How can Christians gain respect from people outside the Church? This respect is important. It means others will listen when we tell the Good News. For Christians, respect has to start first with pleasing God.

Pleasing God (4:1-8)

Some people worry about what others think of them. They seem like they are trying to help others. Really they are trying to make others think good things about them. There are people like this even in church. Some people focus on pleasing others. They care about what people will give them—attention, praise or gifts. Other people want to please God. They care about what God wants to do in their life. Which kind of person are you?

The church in Thessalonica was a great church. Paul wanted them to keep pleasing God. He wanted them to keep growing in their Christian life. He wanted them to respect his leadership and his calling to do God’s work. He wanted each of them to be holy. Holiness is a way of living. Paul taught them all
these things when he was there before. Now he told them again.

What does it mean to be holy? It means to be different. The house of God was holy. It was different from any other house. The Bible is holy. It is different from any other book. God’s Spirit is holy. It is different from any other spirit. Christians should be holy. They should be different from other people. Paul said God has called us to “live a holy life” (v. 7).

How can we be holy? God has given us the Holy Spirit. We must let God’s Spirit control our lives. Then we can be what God wants us to be—holy. It is something we choose to be. Becoming holy is more than just agreeing with God. It is more than just learning about God. It is God’s grace and our faith working together in our lives.

Between verses 3 and 7, Paul describes some common sins. These sins fill many lives today, too. Paul explains one big way the Christian life is different. Christians should stay away from sex sins. Christians should not use their bodies to please their own desires. They should not wrong other Christians. Christians are to respect their bodies. Christians should use their bodies in the right way. This is how we can live a holy life.

We can choose to live a holy life. We need the Holy Spirit’s help to do this. A life of faith pleases God. God tells us, “A man cannot please God unless he has faith. Anyone who comes to God must believe that He is” (Hebrew 11:6a). Faith is how we can please God.

**Love in the Church Family (4:9-10)**

God taught the Thessalonians to love each other. They

**Things to Think About**

1. What star do you respect and why?

2. How can you grow in pleasing God? If you please God more, does that mean God will love you more?

3. Share an example of Christian love done for you or someone you know?

4. What do you think people outside the Church think about people inside the Church? Do they respect them?

5. How are you different from others? How can you grow in becoming holy?
loved all their Christian brothers and sisters in their own country. Paul asked them to grow in their love. Loving more could mean doing more to help in hard times. Loving more could mean praying more for each other. It could mean looking for more ways to help each other grow in Christ.

What does Christian love look like? Think about the story of the Korean workers. Think about the story of the Good Samaritan. Think about Paul writing to encourage these brothers and sisters. Think about Paul’s instructions to live a holy life and grow in love. All these are examples of Christian love.

**Earn Respect from Others (4:11-12)**

Paul wrote to encourage these dear Christian people to live in a certain way. Paul wanted unbelievers to respect the Christians. Paul told them to live a quiet life and learn to work well. This kind of living earns respect from everyone. Living this way made others willing to listen to the Good News. Unbelievers saw a good example of the Christian life. They wanted to know more about becoming a Christian.

Remember our goal is to please God, not to earn respect from others. When we please God, we may also earn respect from others. When others see our good lives, they may ask us questions. Then we can tell them the Good News.

**More Examples of a Holy Life (5:14-24)**

What are ways of living a holy life? What can we do? We can speak, comfort, help, understand, wait, look and do good. We can also be joyful, pray, give thanks, and test everything.

What should we not do? We should not pay back bad or stop the Holy Spirit. We should not laugh at God’s speakers or let good things go away. We should not stay close to something that looks like sin. These are also ways of living the holy life. These are ways we should live.

Jesus is coming again. Christians are to be set apart for God. Every part of our lives belongs to Him. Every part of our lives must keep growing to be complete. Our whole person needs to be holy and without blame. The God Who called us is faithful and will do it. We need His help, and He will give it. What a blessing!
### 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:14-24

1 Christian brothers, we ask you, because of the Lord Jesus, to keep on living in a way that will please God. I have already told you how to grow in the Christian life.

2 The Lord Jesus gave us the right and the power to tell you what to do.

3 God wants you to be holy. You must keep away from sex sins.

4 God wants each of you to use his body in the right way by keeping it holy and by respecting it.

5 You should not use it to please your own desires like the people who do not know God.

6 No man should do wrong to his Christian brother in anything. The Lord will punish a person who does. I have told you this before.

7 For God has not called us to live in sin. He has called us to live a holy life.

8 The one who turns away from this teaching does not turn away from man, but from God. It is God Who has given us His Holy Spirit.

9 You do not need anyone to write to you about loving your Christian brothers. God has taught you to love each other.

10 You love all the Christians in all the country of Macedonia. But we ask you to love them even more.

11 Do your best to live a quiet life. Learn to do your own work well. We told you about this before.

12 By doing this, you will be respected by those who are not Christians. Then you will not be in need and others will not have to help you.

### 1 Thessalonians 5:14-24

5:14 We ask you, Christian brothers, speak to those who do not want to work. Comfort those who feel they cannot keep going on. Help the weak. Understand and be willing to wait for all men.

15 Do not let anyone pay back for the bad he received. But look for ways to do good to each other and to all people.

16 Be full of joy all the time.

17 Never stop praying.

18 In everything give thanks. This is what God wants you to do because of Christ Jesus.

19 Do not try to stop the work of the Holy Spirit.

20 Do not laugh at those who speak for God.

21 Test everything and do not let good things get away from you.

22 Keep away from everything that even looks like sin.

23 May the God of peace set you apart for Himself. May every part of you be set apart for God. May your spirit and your soul and your body be kept complete. May you be without blame when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

24 The One Who called you is faithful and will do what He promised.
Hope for Now and Forever

My mother-in-law, Marcia, learned she had cancer in December 2001. She learned the cancer was very bad. The next day she told us that she was not afraid to die. She was sure about what would happen to her after she died. She knew she would be with Jesus in heaven. She died three weeks later.

I had the honor of staying with Marcia one night in the hospital. She prayed that she would not have to suffer. She did not want us to have to watch her suffer. She did not suffer. She was in the hospital a very short time. Medicines controlled the pain. She told us to love each other even more after she was gone. I was with her when she died. It was a very hard time for us. We had great sorrow, but we also had hope. We knew that we would see her again. But we would not see her again for now. We would see her again in heaven. That is where life with Jesus lasts forever. This is our comfort for now. That is our sure hope forever.

Not Knowing, Sorrow, and Hope (4:13-18)

Everyone dies. Unless Jesus comes again soon, we will all die. That is the truth. The Thessalonians knew this, but they had questions. What will happen to our loved ones that have died? Will Jesus return soon? Have we missed Jesus’ return?

Jesus had already died, come to life again and gone into heaven. This happened about 20 years before Paul wrote this letter. The Thessalonians did not know about these things. They did not have the New Testament. They did not know because
they had not been taught. That is why they asked questions.

Sometimes we do not know things because we have not been taught. Sometimes it is because we do not understand. In those times, it is important to ask questions. Some things about God are very hard for people to understand. It is hard to understand about life now and life forever. As people, we must know that we will never understand everything. Only God knows and understands everything!

Paul wanted the church to have answers for their questions. He wanted them to know for sure about Jesus’ death. He wanted them to know for sure that Jesus is coming again. He did not want them to have sorrow like people with no hope. Sorrow can sometimes make us feel like there is no hope or help. There may be too much pain in our sorrow at first. We may feel lost and alone. That is normal. Jesus had sorrow when His friend Lazarus died. We see Jesus’ sorrow in John 11:35. “….Jesus cried.” We need to cry. In time we can move forward. We can know that God has taken care of our loved one. We can be sure He will continue to take care of us. We are not alone. That is our comfort. That is our sure hope.

Paul said that Jesus’ coming again is the reason we have hope. Jesus made Lazarus come alive again. Jesus himself died and came alive again. Our loved ones who belong to Jesus may die, but we have hope. They will come alive again when Jesus comes back. Jesus promised His followers that He would come back (John 14:3). We don’t know when, but we know that Jesus is coming again. We will not miss it. There will be loud sounds. Those who have died and come alive again will go up first.

**Things to Think About**

1. Who do you know who has died with courage and a sure hope? Tell their story.

2. Are you afraid to die? Why or why not?

3. Did you know there are ministries that help people with their sorrow after a loved one has died?

4. What happens to a person who does not feel hope?

5. How do God’s plans for you in 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 make a difference in your life?

6. If you could change one quality in your life, what would it be and how would you change it?
Those who are alive will go up next. All who belong to Jesus will meet Him and live with Him forever. This is our comfort and our sure hope.

**Coming Again (5:1-11)**

Children grow up and leave home. Some go to college. Some go away to learn how to do a job. When they come home to visit, their parents are glad to see them. Parents clean the house. They plan to eat their child’s favorite foods. They **prepare** in many ways for their child’s return. Their son or daughter is coming again. They want everything to be right for them. They want to be ready!

Christians are glad when they think about Jesus’ return. They want to know when He is coming. Some people have tried to give a date for Jesus’ return. They are always wrong. Paul tells us the same thing that Jesus told His followers (Matthew 24:36 and Acts 1:6-8). We do not know when Jesus will return. Only God knows.

For those who are not Christians, the coming of Jesus will be a big surprise. They will think everything is fine. Then **suddenly** it will not be fine. It will be a terrible day for them. The Book of Revelation tells about this. Many people study it, but it is very hard to understand.

Christians are like children in the light of day waiting for Jesus’ return. They want to be ready for His coming. Peter wrote about Jesus’ coming when he said, “Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, you should think about the kind of life you are living. It should be holy and God-like” (2 Peter 3:11).

Paul tells us how to live this kind of life. We must stay awake. We must remember that Jesus is coming. We must see what is really happening around us. We should live with faith, love and hope. We should know that Jesus died for us as just as God planned. He did this so that we could live with Him. We should encourage each other to be strong and live this way. We should comfort each other with the truth of His coming again.

These Christians were already encouraging each other. That’s what we can do while we wait for Jesus. We can help each other be ready for that amazing day. Jesus will come back for us, dead or alive!
1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

13 Christian brothers, we want you to know for sure about those who have died. You have no reason to have sorrow as those who have no hope.

14 We believe that Jesus died and then came to life again. Because we believe this, we know that God will bring to life again all those who belong to Jesus.

15 We tell you this as it came from the Lord. Those of us who are alive when the Lord comes again will not go ahead of those who have died.

16 For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud call. The head angel will speak with a loud voice. God's horn will give its sounds. First, those who belong to Christ will come out of their graves to meet the Lord.

17 Then, those of us who are still living here on earth will be gathered together with them in the clouds. We will meet the Lord in the sky and be with Him forever.

18 Because of this, comfort each other with these words.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

1 You do not need anyone to write to tell you when and at what kind of times these things will happen.

2 You know for sure that the day the Lord comes back to earth will be as a robber coming in the night.

3 When they say, "Everything is fine and safe," then all at once they will be destroyed. It will be like pain that comes on a woman when a child is born. They will not be able to get away from it.

4 But you are not in darkness, Christian brothers. That day will not surprise you as a robber would

5 For you are children of the light and of the day. We are not of darkness or of night.

6 Keep awake! Do not sleep like others. Watch and keep your minds awake to what is happening.

7 People sleep at night. Those who get drunk do it at night.

8 Because we are men of the day, let us keep our minds awake. Let us cover our chests with faith and love. Let us cover our heads with the hope of being saved.

9 God planned to save us from the punishment of sin through our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not plan for us to suffer from His anger.

10 He died for us so that, dead or alive, we will be with Him.

11 So comfort each other and make each other strong as you are already doing.
Being a Healthy Church in Hard Times

The Church in China is healthy. I have talked with Christians there. Many people in China want to hurt Christians who live there. But the Christians there tell me not to pray against these hard times. Instead, they ask me to pray they will grow in hard times. They believe that this trouble is making them stronger in their faith. They believe prayer is powerful.

The Church in China prays for their Christian brothers and sisters. They pray for Christians around the world. They pray that their lives will not be too soft. They pray that Christians will not become weak and lazy. They know that they are not the only ones having hard times. They pray the Church will grow in China and all over the world. They believe prayer is powerful.

We pray for them and Christians everywhere. We pray for the missionaries God has called. We pray they can tell the Good News to every nation. We pray for our new brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray for Christians who have known Jesus a long time. We pray they will not be tired. We pray that God will show us how to pray, work hard, and have peace. Prayer is powerful.

Healthy Churches Pray (3:1-5)

First Samuel is an interesting book in the Old Testament. It tells the history of God’s people. It tells about the time Israel wanted a king. At first, God said no. But God’s people kept demanding a king. God eventually gave them a king. Later, Israel did not like their king. They went to a man who spoke for God.
This man was named Samuel. They asked Samuel to pray for them. What was Samuel’s reply? “...Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by not praying for you” (1 Samuel 12:23a). This helps us understand prayer. Have you ever failed to pray for each other? Did you think of it as a sin against God?

Paul asked people to pray for him in many of his letters. He knew that God had called him to be a special missionary. He knew he needed to live a holy life to do God’s work. He knew he needed God’s power in his life. He believed in the power of prayer to help him. Every pastor, missionary, church leader and Christian brother or sister needs prayer.

Paul asked for two things. First, he asked them to pray “that the Word of the Lord will go out over all the land and prove its power” (v. 1). We pray for all missionaries. We ask God if He wants us to help take the Good News to other lands. Second, Paul asked that they would “be kept from sinful men because not all men are Christians” (v. 2). Paul was troubled by some people who said they were Christians. Their actions and words showed they were not Christians.

All churches have members who are not true believers. These people may not understand what is means to be a Christian. They may be pretending to be Christians. Paul asked people to pray about this. We should also pray that our leaders will be safe from these sinful men. Pray that these types of people will not have power in our churches.

Paul’s prayer request led him to describe one important quality of God. God is faithful. Prayer made a difference for Paul and for these believers. God would give them strength. He would
keep them safe from the devil. God is faithful to do this for us, too. God has more power than the devil.

In his letters, Paul told the Thessalonians to do many things. He was sure they would obey. He prayed that God would give them His love. He prayed God would help them wait for Christ. It is important to remember how much God loves us. We must remember in good times and hard times. Then we can grow in our love for others. We can be sure that He will help us in every way.

**Healthy Churches Work (3:6-15)**

*Keep away!* These are strong words of warning. It usually means there is danger. Paul used these strong words. He said them in the name of the Lord Jesus. He had talked about this problem in his first letter. Some members had not obeyed.

The Thessalonians needed to keep away from Christians who were lazy. They did not follow Christian ways. Some believers were waiting for Jesus but not working. Paul and his friends worked to earn the right to eat. The missionaries showed church members it is important to earn things. It is wrong to take something without earning it. However, this does not mean God’s workers should go unpaid. The missionaries could have been paid for doing God’s work. Paul and his friends were just setting an example for people.

Paul spoke strongly again to those who were able but unwilling to work. He said that “if a man does not work, he should not eat” (3:10b). He told them to be quiet, go to work, and eat their own food. Paul wanted the lazy Christians to feel ashamed of their actions. He wanted them to change their ways.

Paul reminded the believers to continue doing good. He reminded them that the lazy Christians were still part of God’s family. There should be no hate towards them. This was a good church, but it was not a perfect church.

**Healthy Churches Have Peace (3:16)**

Even a healthy church has problems. When problems come, remember God is with us. God is the Lord of peace. He gives true believers His peace at all times. Paul prayed God’s peace for the Thessalonians. With Him all things are possible!
**2 Thessalonians 3:1-16**

1 My last words to you, Christian brothers, are that you pray for us. Pray that the Word of the Lord will go out over all the land and prove its power just as it did with you.

2 Pray that we will be kept from sinful men, because not all men are Christians.

3 But the Lord is faithful. He will give you strength and keep you safe from the devil.

4 We have faith in the Lord for you. We believe you are doing and will keep on doing the things we told you.

5 May the Lord lead your hearts into the love of God. May He help you as you wait for Christ.

6 Now this is what we tell you to do, Christian brothers. In the name of the Lord Jesus, keep away from any Christian who is lazy and who does not do what we taught you.

7 You know you should follow the way of life we lived when we were with you. We worked hard while we were there.

8 We did not eat anyone's food without paying for it. We worked hard night and day so none of you would have to give us anything.

9 We could have asked you to give us food. But we did not so that you might follow our way of living.

10 When we were with you, we told you that if a man does not work, he should not eat.

11 We hear that some are not working. But they are spending their time trying to see what others are doing.

12 Our words to such people are that they should be quiet and go to work. They should eat their own food. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we say this.

13 But you, Christian brothers, do not get tired of doing good.

14 If anyone does not want to listen to what we say in this letter, remember who he is and stay away from him. In that way, he will be put to shame.

15 Do not think of him as one who hates you. But talk to him as a Christian brother.

16 May the Lord of peace give you His peace at all times. The Lord be with you all.