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# Part IX: Paul's First Letter to the Church at Thessalonica *(1 Thessalonians)*

## Application Guide: 1 Thessalonians 1

### 1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

**Choose one:**

- a. Have you ever made a new friend when you were on vacation or when you've gone to summer camp or camp meeting? What did you do to stay in touch with your new friend(s) after you went back home?

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- b. Do you have any aunts, uncles, cousins or grandparents that don't live near you? How do you stay in touch with them and keep them an active part of your life?

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### 2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

**Background:** Acts 17 records the story of Paul and his companions going to Thessalonica. They were warmly received and taught in the local synagogue, explaining to the people that the prophecies of the Scriptures pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. After three Sabbaths there were many new believers, both Jewish and Greek. But there were also some jealous Jews who started a riot and had Paul and his friends driven from town. 1 Thessalonians is the first letter that Paul wrote to the new believers in Thessalonica, probably just a few short weeks after their conversion to Christianity.

Paul spends chapter 1 encouraging the new believers. Why do you think he starts out encouraging them rather than telling them what they could do better? How do you feel when someone encourages you?

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Some of Paul's first words of encouragement were to assure the new believers that they belonged to God and that He had chosen them to be His people. How do you think this made the people of Thessalonica feel? How does it make you feel to know that God has chosen you as well?

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Paul also tells the Thessalonians that he thanks God for their “faithful work and loving deeds” (vs. 3). Why do you think he told them that? Do you think that people who claim to believe in Jesus will always do loving things? Why?

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Paul says that his witness to them was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. What evidence do you see for that claim?

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Paul also states that even though believing brought “severe suffering” (vs. 6) upon them, they were willing to endure it. Paul goes on to say that when they suffered for believing in Jesus they were imitating both him and Jesus. Do you think people who believe in Jesus will always suffer in some way? Why?

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**3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)**

- a. Think through your interactions with others over the past two days. Do you have the tendency to talk about positive things (good qualities in other people, etc.) or negative things (bad qualities in other people, gossip, etc.)? Do you tend to encourage people or discourage people? Why do you think that is?
- b. Do you enjoy being around people who are very complimentary and encouraging? Think of how you can become a person who is a great encourager. Put reminders in your phone, or someplace that will help you remember to say kind things to those you meet.

**4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)**

- a. Pray for God to help you develop an even more positive spirit than you have now. Pray for Him to help you see the bright side of every situation.
- b. Pray for someone else you know to become more positive and encouraging as well. Try to be an encourager to this person as you pray for them to be encouraging to others.

**5. Outreach Idea**

Think of three people you can encourage this week and do so.