

2 Thessalonians

Leader Guide

(NASB and ESV)

SO YOU WON'T BE DECEIVED
ABOUT HIS COMING

2 Thessalonians Leader Guide (NASB and ESV)

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USING LEADER GUIDES

Leader Guides are intended for you, the leader, to guide your Precept Upon Precept® and In & Out® discussions. They are designed to help you reason through the content of the lessons and to ensure you have understood what your group should have learned from their study. The guides offer effective plans for leading discussions.

The Holy Spirit is your guide as you prepare. He is the one who knows what your group needs to apply to their lives. Pray for them as they study and for yourself as you prepare to lead the discussion.

These guides can be used for either the NASB or the ESV edition of the courses. ESV words follow the NASB after a slash / or are set off with parentheses.

Leader Guides include the following:

- Lesson emphasis
- A logical order for the discussion
- Discussion questions
- Suggested visual aid(s)

Practical tips for using the Leader Guide:

- **Don't simply "do" the lesson.**
Stay with the lesson until you have a good understanding of it. This will give you a better grasp of how the Leader Guide takes you through the lesson.
- **You don't have to ask every question in the guide.**
Often one question will be covered while discussing another question so there is no reason to ask it. Your goal is not to ask every question, but to ask enough questions to make sure your group understood the lesson and to help them apply the truths to their lives.

Using the Leader Guide with In & Out


When your entire group uses In & Out

Compare an In & Out lesson with the Leader Guide. Use what relates to the In & Out lesson as a guide for the discussion. Don't teach what's not in In & Out lessons. Remember your goal in the discussion is for your group to discuss what they've learned, not for you to lecture on what you learned.

For groups studying both Precept Upon Precept and In & Out

Use the Leader Guides as designed for PUP, knowing that the In & Out assignments will be covered in the discussion. Make a note in the Leader Guide of what is not in the In & Out.

| PRINTED PAGE NO. | L E S S O N S | PDF PAGE NO. |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | LESSON ONE: Overview | 5 |
| 7 | LESSON TWO: 2 Thessalonians 1 | 11 |
| 15 | LESSON THREE: 2 Thessalonians 2 | 19 |
| 25 | LESSON FOUR: 2 Thessalonians 3 | 29 |

To locate a particular lesson in the pdf, click on  in the grey bar on the left side of the window. Bookmarks will appear for each of the lessons. Select the lesson you need.

2 THESSALONIANS LEADER GUIDE Lesson 1

Lesson emphasis:

- 2 Thessalonians overview

You might begin this first discussion by asking your group if something in 2 Thessalonians got their attention. Keep this very short, but it can create an atmosphere among your group of sharing their thoughts with one another.

AUTHOR AND RECIPIENTS

Tell your group to look at the lists they made about the author(s) and recipients. Who wrote 2 Thessalonians? What type of literature is it?

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are named in 1:1.
But only Paul is named as the author in 2:5 and 3:17.

Paul probably dictated the body of the letter to either Silvanus or Timothy, one of whom was the literal scribe. Paul himself then wrote with his own hand the greeting of the letter, as was his distinguishing mark in all his letters. It's probably 3:16-18 in this letter.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were in agreement with all written in this letter.

Who was this letter written to? Why?

The Thessalonian church was the recipient of this letter. It was a growing church, but one in persecution.

They were in danger of a false message or letter believed to be from Paul about the day of the Lord. 2 Thessalonians was written to correct that false information.

What was the history of the relationship between the authors and the church?

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had been to Thessalonica according to 1:10; 2:5, 15; 3:6-10. The reference in 2:15 to "by letter from us" (ESV—by our letter) indicates that there had been a previous letter to the Thessalonian believers from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. That letter is 1 Thessalonians.

Tell your group to look at the chart "Sequence of Events in Paul's Life after His Conversion" and ask when this letter was written.

On Paul's second missionary journey, A.D. 49-51

Shortly after writing 1 Thessalonians—both were written on the same missionary journey

What happened in Acts 17 when Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy took the gospel to Thessalonica?

Acts 17:1-13

As was Paul’s custom, he first went to the synagogue and reasoned the Scriptures for three Sabbaths—which was between two and four weeks that he was there.

Some of the Jews believed, but some became jealous and formed a mob and made accusations. But a large number of Greeks and women believed.

Those Jews who didn’t believe even followed Paul to Berea stirring up the crowds.

Direct your group to their At a Glance chart as a visual aid for this discussion.
Then lead them through the letter asking questions about what they marked in each chapter.

2 THESSALONIANS 1

How is the church described? Remind your group to look at their list about the recipients.

Faith greatly enlarged / growing abundantly

Love grows / increasing

Perseverance / steadfastness, faith, and endurance in persecutions and afflictions

They were used as examples to other churches.

How does this description apply to believers now?

They should be growing in faith and love.

Some might be going through persecutions or sufferings.

These exhortations call believers to endure and love others in affliction and suffering.

The Thessalonians are examples for all to follow.

Ask your group what they observed in verses 5-10 about persecutions, afflictions, and suffering.

God will give / grant relief to believers who are afflicted.

He’ll repay those who afflict believers.

When the Lord comes

Verse 7 says Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were also being afflicted.

They were in affliction but were not concerned for themselves but for other believers being persecuted. Paul wrote encouragement to those in suffering.

How are persecuted believers to live until He comes?

Like the Thessalonian church did, verses 3-4.

What did Paul write in 1 Thessalonians which relates to this?

Paul had already written to the Thessalonians about the subject of affliction and opposition. Silvanus, Timothy, and he had been mistreated / shamefully treated when they took the gospel to Philippi right before going to Thessalonica. He warned them in advance of the trials he would suffer.

Lead your discussion back to 2 Thessalonians 1.

Ask what your group observed about the Lord's coming in verses 7-10.

His coming gives hope to believers, and they'll marvel at Him.

But for unbelievers, verse 8, those who don't know God and don't obey the gospel, His coming brings retribution / vengeance and the penalty / punishment of eternal destruction.

How does verse 10 relate to 1 Thessalonians?

Verse 10 is the first mention of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy communicating previously to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy spoke God's Word to the Thessalonians when they believed.

1 Thessalonians 1:3, 8

These verses tell what happened when the Thessalonians heard and received the Word; they spread it throughout the region. They had a faith that worked, a love that labored, and a steadfastness of hope in Jesus.

How does 2 Thessalonians 1 end?

Verses 11-12 are a prayer.

NOTE: Encourage your group that they'll study prayer in a later lesson.

Ask what they noted on their At a Glance chart as a possible theme for this chapter.

Growing church persecuted; relief when Jesus comes

2 THESSALONIANS 2

What is this chapter about? Ask what your group marked and observed.

The church was in danger of false teaching—a message or letter “as if from us” (ESV—seeming to be from us) saying the day of the Lord had already come. Hearing this can cause some to be shaken and disturbed / alarmed.

So Paul reminded them of what he had taught them when he was there. He told them about what had to take place before the day of the Lord.

You might ask if they’ve heard teaching about end times which shook or disturbed / alarmed them. How can studying this letter help prevent that?

What had Paul written in 1 Thessalonians about the day of the Lord?

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

The Thessalonians had not only been instructed by Paul when he was there with them, but he had written to them about the day of the Lord in his first letter to them.

The day of the Lord will come like a thief, but not for the brethren. He reminded them twice of what they had already been taught.

You can ask your group if they ever need to be reminded of what they already know. How does it help?

Lead the discussion back to 2 Thessalonians 2.

Who are verses 13-15 about?

Verses 13 and 14 build up the Thessalonians by reminding them of who they are in Christ and why they were called to follow Him.

Verse 15 gives the command which can summarize the message of this letter. They should not be shaken but stand firm and hold to what they had been taught previously, either when Paul was with them or in the first letter to them.

He had taught them before about afflictions, the day of the Lord, and all this letter contains. So he told them to stand firm and hold to that teaching.

NOTE: You don’t need to bring this up, but in case someone in your group does—“traditions” does not have a negative connotation in the context of this letter, but is referring to what Paul had taught them.

How does this chapter end? What are verses 16-17?

Prayer

Verses 16-17 are like a benediction. This chapter also closes with a prayer.

Ask your group to check their possible chapter theme on the At a Glance chart.

Don't be deceived, day of Lord hasn't come yet; lawless one revealed

2 THESSALONIANS 3

How does this chapter begin?

Prayer again and Paul asked for prayer

Ask your group what they observed in this chapter about work and the Christian.

There were some who were not working and were being a burden to others.

Paul reminded them of the example Silvanus, Timothy, and he had been when in Thessalonica—they worked night and day to offer themselves as a model / example.

What did Paul write about work in 1 Thessalonians?

1 Thessalonians 2:9; 4:10b-12; 5:12-14

He reminded them of his example when he was there. He had commanded them previously regarding work and had given instruction to admonish the unruly / idle.

What is a possible theme for this chapter?

Prayer request and commands about the undisciplined / idle and work

How does this letter end? How do these exhortations relate to the problems in this letter?

Peace in every circumstance / in every way—persecutions, afflictions, suffering

The way to know if a letter was from Paul—he wrote the greeting or the end with his own hand. Relate to 2:2 and 15.

What is the relationship between the problems in this letter?

Maybe the false message or letter caused some to think they were in the day of the Lord because of their persecutions, afflictions, and suffering. Then those might have been the ones who stopped working because of the false message.

Paul corrected all of the above.

He told in advance that affliction is part of a believer's life. It makes one worthy of the kingdom. The day of the Lord won't come until the man of lawlessness is revealed. Believers should work; and if they don't, then they shouldn't eat others' bread and be a burden.

Ask how your group summarized the theme of the book on the At a Glance chart.

Stand firm and hold to the traditions taught by us

How does this letter apply to believers now? Ask your group how it relates to their lives.

2 THESSALONIANS LEADER GUIDE Lesson 2

Lesson emphasis:

- 2 Thessalonians 1

REVIEW

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask what they remember about 2 Thessalonians.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy wrote this second letter to the Thessalonian church.

The Thessalonian believers were described as a growing church.

Paul wrote the greeting of the letter with his own hand, as was his way of writing.

He drew attention to the fact that this was the way he signed his letters because the Thessalonians had gotten a message or letter as if from him / seeming to be from him, but it was not.

He told them to stand firm and hold to what they had been taught by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy either when they had been in Thessalonica or in the first letter.

Paul reminded them that the day of the Lord had not come as the false letter had said. The coming of the Lord is a main theme in the letter.

Chapter 1 primarily deals with the subjects of persecution and the Lord's return.

Chapter 2 teaches about the day of the Lord and the man of lawlessness.

Chapter 3 mainly gives commands about working and the unruly / idle brethren.

2 THESSALONIANS 1

Verses 1-2

What are these verses? How does verse 2 relate to the rest of this letter?

This is a common introduction to most of Paul's letters.
The authors and recipients are stated.

Grace and peace are what the Thessalonian church needed at that time.
Grace to endure and peace in the midst of their trials

Verses 3-4

Who do these verses describe? And how?

The Thessalonian church

Faith was greatly enlarged / growing abundantly
Love for one another grows greater / is increasing
Perseverance / steadfastness, faith, endurance in persecutions and afflictions

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were thankful for their faith and love growing.

They used the Thessalonians as an example of enduring persecutions.

Ask your group what they learned about the word studies from verse 4 and how they relate to the text and also to their lives.

perseverance / steadfastness— *hupomone*— “steadfastness, constancy, endurance”¹;
“‘patience,’ lit., ‘a remaining under’”²

persecutions— *diogmos*— a more specific term; “to chase, to pursue”³; “harassment, oppression”⁴

The Thessalonian believers were being persecuted by their enemies.

endure / enduring— *anechomai*— “be patient with, put up with . . . bear with”⁵

afflictions— *thlipsis*, “more general and denotes tribulation of any kind”⁶
“‘primarily means ‘a pressing, pressure’ . . . anything which burdens the spirit”⁷
“trouble, distress”⁸
“refer almost invariably to that which comes upon them from without”⁹

The persecutions could have been the cause of the afflictions.

¹ James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995), G5281.

² W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), p. 200.

³ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), 2 Th 1:4.

⁴ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁵ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁶ Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), p. 482.

⁷ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc., 1985), New Testament, p. 17.

⁸ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁹ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc., 1985), New Testament, p. 17.

Verses 5-10

What is the connection between verses 4 and 5?

Verse 5 seems to explain more of the thought begun in verse 4.

What are these verses about? Ask about the word studies in verse 5.

The reason for the persecutions and afflictions is stated in verse 5.
It is God's righteous judgment for believers to be considered worthy of His kingdom.

The word "judgment," can also be translated "decision."¹⁰
This is not a reference to unbelievers in this context.

The Thessalonian believers had perseverance and faith in their persecutions and afflictions. They were growing in their faith and love. This growth is a plain indication / evidence of God's righteous judgment or decision to take them through the suffering, the result being that they will be considered worthy of His kingdom.

suffering—*pascho*, means "to experience a sensation or impression (usually painful)"¹¹

The persecutions and afflictions were suffering.
But it was all for being made worthy of God's kingdom.

Ask your group how they view the suffering in their lives? How can this chapter change their perspective?

God is in charge of believers' refining, although it might come in the form of persecutions and afflictions.

There is a short list at the end of this lesson's guide which you might use as a visual aid for this discussion.

According to verse 7, who else was afflicted?

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were also enduring afflictions, verse 7.

At the end of Day Two, there are a couple of questions in the lesson, "Is suffering the lot of every Christian?" and "Why suffering and affliction?"

Philippians 1:29-30

Believers are granted to suffer for Christ's sake.

¹⁰ Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998), G2920.

¹¹ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Greek Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 56, G3958.

Those who oppose are headed for destruction.

John 15:16-21

Jesus said the world would hate believers because it hated Him.

A slave is not greater than His Master; the world persecuted Jesus and will do the same to His followers, disciples.

Those who persecute don't know the Father, verse 21.

2 Timothy 3:10-12

Timothy had followed Paul's persecutions and sufferings.

All believers, those who desire to live godly, will be persecuted.

The question at the beginning of Day Three is how suffering prepares believers for the kingdom of God. Ask your group what they learned from the cross-references.

James 1:2-4

The trials, pressures are a test of faith which produce endurance / steadfastness.

1 Peter 1:6-9

Trials or pressures again are tests, tests by fire for believers whose faith is proven / shown as genuine as a result of those trials. The outcome of faith is salvation. Endurance is the proof of true salvation.

1 Peter 4:12-19

The word "testing / test" is used again in this passage. Sharing in the sufferings of Christ means that believers suffer as a result of being identified with Him, for His name. The tests of suffering are only for those things which glorify the Lord, not for one's sins.

How does 1 Peter 4:17 relate to 2 Thessalonians 1:5 and 8?

Verse 17 relates to 2 Thessalonians 1:5. "Judgment" in this context is also referring to believers, those in God's household, suffering.

The contrast is those who don't obey the gospel—unbelievers, the godless man and the sinner.

You can ask what else your group learned from the 1 Peter cross-references.

1 Peter 4:19

This is encouraging to those undergoing sufferings; exhort your group to do the same—do what is right / good while entrusting one's soul to the faithful Creator.

1 Peter 5:8-10

The adversary, the devil, is the one who is behind Jesus' enemies. Therefore, he is the one behind the persecution of Christians.

He is like a lion seeking to devour unsuspecting believers. His followers are like wolves seeking the unsuspecting sheep.

Believers can resist him in their faith, like the Thessalonians.

All believers all over the world are suffering the persecutions and afflictions of those who don't obey the gospel, those who don't know God, those who are under the dominion of the devil.

This also states how the persecutions and sufferings make one worthy of the kingdom. God will perfect / restore and confirm, strengthen, and establish those who suffer.

What are some benefits of suffering according to Psalm 119 and Matthew 5?

Psalm 119:67-71

The psalmist said that before he was afflicted he went astray. The affliction was good for him because it taught him the Lord's statutes, and as a result he kept God's Word after being afflicted.

Matthew 5:10-12

Verbal persecution is also suffering afflictions. Insults / reviling and false accusations are also persecutions. Just because some believers are not being put in prisons or being beaten or killed does not mean they aren't being persecuted.

Jesus said the prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Those who do what is right are often spoken against by the ungodly.

There is a great reward in heaven for those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

How does Hebrews 5:7-9 relate?

Hebrews 5:7-9

Jesus suffered while on earth. As He learned obedience through what He suffered, so do those who follow Him. And those who obey Him receive eternal life.

Now ask about application for your group. How do they view their suffering? How do they go through it? What changes might they need to make in perspective or action?

Lead your discussion back to 2 Thessalonians 1.

What does the text say about those who afflict and unbelievers in verses 8 and 9?

God will repay with affliction those who afflict believers.

Those who do not know God and don't obey the gospel of Jesus will pay the penalty / suffer the punishment of eternal destruction.

NOTE: Some think this is referring to one group and others think it's two different groups. Either way, it describes unbelievers.

How does this contrast with believers in verse 10?

Unbelievers will be away from His presence, but believers will be marveling when He comes and is glorified.

Verses 11-12

How does this prayer at the end of the chapter relate to the church being afflicted, persecuted?

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy did not pray for the Thessalonians to be removed from their suffering. They prayed that the Lord would count / make them worthy in the midst of it.

Relate this to verse 5.

Faith is mentioned again in the prayer.

Their faith was greatly enlarged / growing abundantly.

They had faith in the midst of persecutions and afflictions.

The prayer is that God would fulfill their desire / resolve for goodness / good and the work of faith with power. That work of faith related to their persecutions, that power for faithful endurance and perseverance.

The result of the prayer is the Lord's name is glorified.

And the believers are glorified in Him.

To end this discussion, ask your group what they learned from Psalm 73 and how it relates to them.

Psalm 73

It might seem like there is no justice for the wicked who prosper.

Verses 17 and 18 say that their end is destruction / ruin.

Verse 27, those far from God will perish. He destroys the unfaithful.

The nearness of God is good for the faithful, those who believe.

He is a wonderful refuge.

Persecutions, Afflictions, Suffering

Who suffers?

All believers, Christians

Why?

To be worthy of the kingdom
Test, proof of faith

2 THESSALONIANS LEADER GUIDE Lesson 3

Lesson emphasis:

- 2 Thessalonians 2

REVIEW

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask what they remember about 2 Thessalonians, especially chapter 1.

The Thessalonian believers were described as a growing church.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy wrote this second letter to them because of a false message or letter saying that the day of the Lord had already come.

The letter begins with much exhortation about the Thessalonian believers standing firm and enduring in persecutions. Paul told them about the relief coming, but not until Jesus is revealed from heaven, the second coming.

Jesus will also at that time deal out retribution / vengeance, repayment, to those who have afflicted believers.

2 THESSALONIANS 2

Verses 1-2

How does this chapter begin? And ask about the word studies.

Paul made a request of the Thessalonian believers.
It concerned the Lord's coming and believers gathering together to Him.

“coming,” *parousia*— “literally, ‘a presence,’ *para*, ‘with,’ and *ousia*, ‘being’ . . . denotes both an ‘arrival’ and a consequent ‘presence with’”¹²

“gathering together / being gathered together,” *episunagoge*—means “a complete collection”¹³; “‘to gather together,’ suggesting stress upon the place at which the ‘gathering’ is made”¹⁴

¹² W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc., 1985), p. 111.

¹³ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Greek Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 32, G1997.

¹⁴ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc., 1985), p. 261.

How does verse 2 relate to the coming and gathering?

Evidently, they are closely related to the day of the Lord since the message that the day had come could have caused some of the believers to be shaken and disturbed.

Paul said in verse 1 that the request was regarding the coming and gathering, then proceeded to talk about the day of the Lord.

So, whatever the connection, there was potential for the believers to be concerned about the coming and gathering if the day of the Lord had already come.

There is a simple timeline at the end of this lesson's guide which you might use as a visual aid for this discussion. Add to it as things come up in your discussion.

How does what Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians compare with what he said in this letter?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

First, he told them about the hope regarding believers who die.

Those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, believers who died, won't be left behind when He comes.

He will descend from heaven
With a shout / cry of command
With the voice of the / an archangel
With the sound of God's trumpet
The dead in Christ will rise first

Their bodies will rise since their souls and spirits are with the Lord when they die. Verse 14 says Jesus will bring them with Him when He comes—their souls and (or) spirits.

Then those believers who are alive at that time will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. He doesn't come to earth at that time.

You can ask your group if they think this refers to the "gathering" in 2 Thessalonians 2 and why they think as they do.

Ask what they learned about "the rapture" from 1 Corinthians 15:50-54.

Jesus died and rose again.
Some believers died, bodies buried and spirit/soul went to be home with the Lord.
Not all Christians die; some remain alive.
The dead in Christ will rise.
The living believers are caught up with them.
All bodies are changed to immortal ones.

Lead your discussion back to 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

What did Paul say to do with this information? Relate it to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.

Comfort one another with these words.
What an encouragement for all Christians.

NOTE: Some do not believe in a “rapture” of the church, so there might be debate in your discussion if any have been taught that there isn’t one or have read it in a commentary. Try to stay focused on what God’s Word clearly says.

In both 1 and 2 Thessalonians Paul addressed the coming and gathering, or being caught up together, and then the day of the Lord. There were no chapter divisions when he wrote these letters.

He went from the saints being caught up to the day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, just as he did in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.

Verses 3-12

Ask your group what they learned from these verses and the related word definitions.
Add to the visual aid timeline.

The first point Paul stated was that the day of the Lord had not come.

The first command, or direct instruction, in the book is also in verse 3.
It is the individual believer’s responsibility not to be deceived.
It comes by knowing the Word of truth.

He gave a list of some events which have to happen before the day of the Lord.

- The apostasy / rebellion comes first.
apostasia—means “defection, revolt,”¹⁵“departure . . . ‘a falling away’ ”¹⁶

*NOTE: Some teach that this is a reference to the “rapture” of the church since the root word *aphistemi* (*apo*–“from” and *histemi*–“to stand”) can mean “remove” or “put away.”¹⁷*

- The man of lawlessness must also be revealed before the day of the Lord.
- But the one who restrains has to be taken out of the way before the man of lawlessness is revealed.

¹⁵R. L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998, 1981), G646.

¹⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), G646.

¹⁷ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), G868.

“restrains / is restraining,” *katecho*—“to hold down”¹⁸ “hold firmly,”¹⁹ “to hold back, detain”²⁰

In verse 7 it is literally “the restrainer.” “V. 6 speaks of a principle, v. 7 of the principle as embodied in a person or series of persons.”²¹

NOTE: The one who restrains / is restraining might bring up some interesting discussion. Many teach that he is the Holy Spirit dwelling within believers, and when He is taken away at the “rapture,” then there is no more restraint and the man of lawlessness will be revealed.

The mystery of lawlessness, violation of God’s law, is already at work.

And the revealing of the man of lawlessness is being restrained now.

Tell the group to look at their list on the day of the Lord for this next part of the discussion.

What did Paul write the Thessalonians about the day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians?

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night on those saying, “peace and safety / security” The pronouns in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 are not indicating believers, but those who are not.

According to verse 2 believers know that the day is going to come, but the unbelievers will be taken by surprise at it. They’ll not escape, and destruction will come upon them suddenly.

Verse 4 says the day of the Lord will not overtake / surprise believers.

Verse 9 states that believers are not destined for wrath.

How is the day of the Lord described in Joel 2?

Joel 2:1-2, 11, 28-31

A day of darkness and gloom; relate this to 1 Thessalonians 5.

There has never been anything like it and won’t be after it to / through the years of many generations.

Verses 11 and 31 say the day is great and very awesome, who can endure it?

¹⁸ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Greek Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), G2722.

¹⁹ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), p. 306.

²⁰ James Strong, *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2001), G2722.

²¹ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc., 1985), p. 530.

What is the relationship of Acts 2 to the end of Joel 2 and what has to happen before the day of the Lord from these passages?

Acts 2:1, 14-21

The Lord will pour forth of / pour out His Spirit on all His bondslaves / servants, and this happened on Pentecost in Acts 2 when the church was born.

The “all mankind / flesh” is a reference to the Gentiles as well as Israel, and it’s qualified by “My bondslaves /servants,” believers, servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That part of Joel 2 has been fulfilled.

But there are other things which must take place before the day of the Lord.

Wonders in the sky / heavens and on earth
Fire, blood, and smoke
Sun turned to darkness and moon into blood

These things have not happened yet. The day of the Lord has still not come.

What does 2 Peter 3:7, 10-13 add?

The present heavens and earth (ESV—the heavens and earth that now exist) are being reserved / are stored up for judgment of the ungodly.

The day of the Lord will come like a thief, then destruction by fire.

It’s called the day of God in verse 12.

Now you can ask if it makes sense why the Thessalonians might have been shaken and disturbed / alarmed when they heard that the day of the Lord had already come.

The fact that they were in times of persecution, along with the false statement that the day of the Lord had come, could have been too persuasive for some of them.

Encourage your group not to let false teaching and their circumstances dictate what they believe. Their doctrine should come from a thorough study of what God says in His Word.

What is the description of the man of lawlessness?

The son of destruction

He opposes and exalts himself above all gods and objects of worship.

His coming, *parousia*—“presence,”²² is connected with the activity of Satan.

²² James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

At his time there will be power, signs, and false wonders (ESV—power, false signs, and wonders) to deceive with wickedness those who are unsaved, those who perish / are perishing.

How will he be revealed?

When he takes his seat in the temple of God, and displaying / proclaiming that he is God
Therefore, a temple must exist at the time of the man of lawlessness.

If it has not already been discussed, ask about the end of the man of lawlessness.

Verse 8 says it will be by the Lord's second coming.
The breath of His mouth will slay / kill the lawless one.

Ask what your group learned from the cross-references about the man of lawlessness.

1 John 2:18-22 and 4:3; 2 John 7

Many antichrists have appeared even now—those who deny Jesus is the Christ; those who don't acknowledge / confess Jesus coming in the flesh.
But an antichrist is coming.

The spirit of antichrist is already in the world, and the antichrist is coming.

Matthew 24:15-21

Jesus said Daniel spoke of an abomination of desolation. And Jesus warned the people who see that abomination of desolation standing in the holy place—the temple. This compares with what Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2 about the man of lawlessness taking his seat in the temple. This is how the man of lawlessness, the antichrist, will be revealed.

At that time there will be signs, as 2 Thessalonians also says, to mislead.

Revelation 13:1-8

Another way the man of lawlessness is portrayed is as the beast in these verses.
He will have power, throne and great authority from the dragon—Satan—for 42 months.

The whole earth will worship him.

How does the second beast in Revelation 13:11-18 compare with 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12?

The second beast, also called the false prophet in Revelation 19:20, performs signs to deceive the world into worshipping the image of the first beast. This seems to compare with the deluding influence in 2 Thessalonians.

Review the chronological order using your time line but do it by asking questions so that your group is doing the review.

At present time:

Mystery of lawlessness is at work

Restraint is restraining the revelation of the man of lawlessness

Then the apostasy / rebellion comes first.

The restrainer is taken out of the way.

The man of lawlessness is revealed.

The day of the Lord comes.

Jesus comes and slays / kills the lawless one.

Who are verses 10-12 about? What is the description?

Those who perish / are perishing

They are people living at the time when the man of lawlessness is revealed.

They are not saved because they will not receive the love of the truth (ESV—refused to love the truth). They are deceived by wickedness, by the deluding influence / strong delusion of that time.

They believe what is false because of not believing the truth, being deceived and deluded by wickedness / unrighteousness in which they take pleasure. They succumb to the activity of Satan, the signs and false wonders (ESV—false signs and wonders) of that time.

According to verses 10 and 12, they will perish and be judged / condemned.

krino—“to distinguish, i.e. decide”²³; “to separate, select, choose”; hence, ‘to determine’ and so ‘to judge, pronounce judgment’²⁴

Relate this to chapter 1. What will happen when Jesus is “revealed” from heaven at His second coming?

Those who afflict believers now will receive repayment and retribution / vengeance from the Lord. They will pay the penalty (ESV—suffer the punishment) of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord.

This takes place while believers are in His presence and marvel at His coming.

His righteous judgment, decision, is for believers now—allowing them to be refined by the affliction, persecutions, and sufferings they endure.

²³James Strong, *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), G2919.

²⁴W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), p. 336.

Ask your group if this gives them more compassion for unbelievers.

One way to stir interest in unbelievers is to bring up the subject of prophecy.
If they can draw the simple time line, it could possibly be used as a witnessing tool.

Verse 5 of chapter 2 states that Paul taught the Thessalonian believers about these things when he was with them, and that was when they were first saved. So it is good for new believers to know these things, too.

Verses 13-15

Ask about the contrast between the previous verses and these. Who are these verses about?

The brethren / brothers, beloved by the Lord
Chosen by God for salvation, sanctified by the Spirit
Have faith / belief in the truth
Called through the gospel
Gain / obtain the glory of the Lord

Paul draws a stark contrast between those who perish and the believers.

Verse 15 in its immediate context means that no false teaching should shake or disturb / alarm believers. They are to stand firm in the truth of what they've been taught in the Word of God, especially about prophecy in this context.

You can ask how this verse is relevant to your group.

It is so important that they know for themselves what God's Word says so that they can live by it and not be shaken.

Knowing for themselves enables them to stand firm in the midst of any persecution or trial they may be experiencing.

Verses 16-17

How does this chapter close and how does it relate to the rest of the chapter?

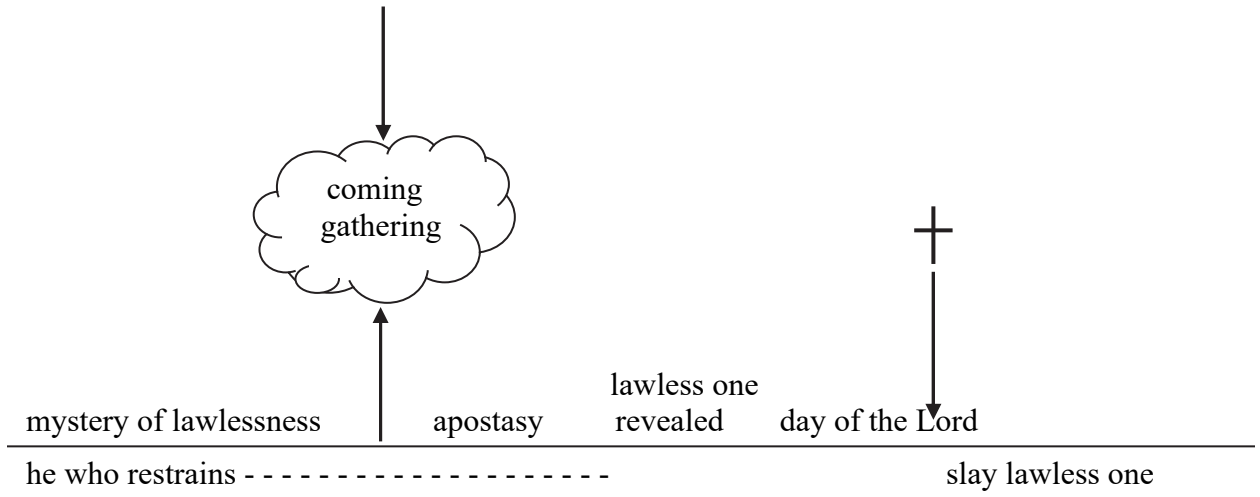
Paul's benediction or prayer for the Thessalonian believers relates to believers now.

It is a request for the Lord to comfort and strengthen / establish them.
There was the potential for them to be led astray by the false teaching which had come to them.

The teachings of the end times should give eternal comfort and good hope because they come from God, the Father of believers.

They were to continue in their good works and their good words.

Encourage your group that if they've never been taught about the things in this chapter, then they are off to a good start now. And they'll do even better by finishing the course.



2 THESSALONIANS LEADER GUIDE Lesson 4

Lesson emphasis:

- 2 Thessalonians 3

REVIEW

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask what 2 Thessalonians is about.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had taken the gospel to Thessalonica.
A church developed.
Paul had written to them before—1 Thessalonians.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy sent exhortation and instructions to the Thessalonian church regarding their problems of persecution, a false message, and the undisciplined / idle among them. It was the second letter addressing these issues.

The Thessalonian believers were described as a growing church.

He wrote this second letter to them because of a false message or letter saying that the day of the Lord had already come. This letter corrected that false message and gave reasons, or teaching, as to why the day of the Lord had not come.

But he began this letter with much exhortation about the Thessalonian believers standing firm and enduring in persecutions. He even told them about the relief coming, but not until Jesus is revealed from heaven, the second coming.

Jesus will also at that time deal out retribution, repayment, to those who have afflicted believers.

2 THESSALONIANS 3

Verses 1-5

How does this chapter begin?

Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for Silvanus, Timothy, and him.

The request was:

The Lord's word would spread rapidly / speed ahead
And be glorified / honored as it was with the Thessalonians.

They be rescued / delivered from perverse / wicked and evil men, unbelievers

Then he told the Thessalonians about the Lord's faithfulness.

The faithful Lord would strengthen and protect them from the evil one (ESV—guard and establish them against the evil one).

What else does 2 Thessalonians say about prayer? Tell your group to look at the chart in the lesson as a visual aid for this part of the discussion.

2 Thessalonians 1:3, 11-12

Paul told the Thessalonian church how thankful he was for them, and he told them why. He used his thanksgiving to the Lord as an encouragement for other believers.

Then he told them specifically what he was praying for them as they were enduring affliction, persecution, and suffering. His request was for them to be counted / made worthy and their desire for goodness (ESV—resolve for good) to be fulfilled. All of this resulted in the Lord being glorified.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

Again Paul stated his thanksgiving for the Thessalonians when correcting them. His thanksgiving was because of what the Lord did for them.

He used his thanksgiving as a reminder to them in this passage, again the result being the Lord's glory.

The request is in verses 16-17. He asked the Lord to comfort and strengthen / establish them. Silvanus, Timothy, and he personally knew about the Lord's love, comfort, and hope in trials.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5, 16

Paul requests prayer for himself that the word will spread rapidly / speed ahead and they will be rescued / delivered from evil men. In verse 5, he then requests for the Lord to direct their hearts into God's love and Christ's steadfastness.

The last prayer request for the Thessalonians was for the Lord of peace to grant them peace—peace in every circumstance/ way: persecutions and suffering, not being deceived, dealing with the undisciplined / idle brothers.

Next, you might ask what 1 Thessalonians says about prayer and thanksgiving.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-3

Paul began his first letter to the Thessalonians like he did the second, with thanksgiving for them. And again, it was specific—they had a work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope in the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

Paul was thankful for people hearing and believing God's Word. Relate this to 2 Thessalonians 3:1—his prayer request.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

They were thankful and prayed to see the Thessalonians and complete / supply what was lacking in their faith.

His request was for the Lord to direct their way to the Thessalonians, but also for the Thessalonians' love to increase more. Relate this to 2 Thessalonians 1:3. The request was answered.

The result of the request is being without blame in holiness at the Lord's coming.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, 23-25

Pray without ceasing.

Give thanks in everything / in all circumstances.

The prayer request in verse 23 was for sanctification to be without blame at Christ's coming. It's similar to the one at the end of chapter 3.

Paul said in this letter, too, that God is faithful and He's the one who will answer the requests.

In verse 25 he asked for prayer—general prayer.

Ask your group what they learned about prayer and thanksgiving from the other cross-references in this lesson.

Romans 1:8-10

Paul also began this letter with thanksgiving for a church and what he knew about their faith. His request was to go to them.

Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21

This is thanksgiving and request based on a church's faith. The requests are for wisdom and knowledge, enlightenment in what believers have in salvation. These prayers exalt the Lord. They're based on His power and love for believers. These speak of the Spirit's part in answered prayer.

Philippians 1:3-5, 9-11

Thanksgiving for partnership in the gospel.

The request is about love and being blameless until / for the day of Christ.

Several of Paul's prayers are alike, but all specific to the church he wrote.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

Paul urged believers to make entreaties, prayers, petitions, thanksgivings for authorities on behalf of all men so that they may lead a tranquil, quiet life in godliness and dignity.

Romans 15:30-33

This is another of Paul's prayer requests for rescue / deliverance from the disobedient / unbelievers and for successful service to Christ's body.

2 Corinthians 1:8-11

The Corinthians prayed for Paul and the Lord delivered him.

Philippians 1:19-20

The Spirit and prayers working together for Paul's deliverance again.

Now ask your group how what they've learned from this short study on prayer that can change their prayer lives for the better.

Lead your discussion back to 2 Thessalonians 3.
What does 2 Thessalonians 3:3 say about the evil one?

The faithful God will strengthen and protect them from (ESV—establish and guard them against) the evil one. This applies to all believers.

What did Paul write about the evil one in his first letter to the Thessalonians?

1 Thessalonians 2:18 and 3:5

Satan hindered Paul from going to Thessalonica at one point.
He is the tempter who tries to ruin people with temptation.

Do believers now need to fear the devil? Why or why not?

Lead the discussion back to 2 Thessalonians 3 and ask about verses 4 and 5.

Again, in verse 4 he encouraged them by stating his confidence in them to continue doing what they were commanded.

Verse 5 is another request for the Thessalonians.

That the Lord direct their hearts into God's love.
Relate to chapter 1. Their love was growing.

And into the steadfastness of Christ
Relate to chapter 1, verse 4. They were enduring in persecutions.

Verses 6-13

What are these verses about? Ask about the word studies, too.

These are Paul's commands to the Thessalonians.

Keep away from every unruly / idle brother.

“unruly / idleness”
ataktos—The basic meaning is to be out of order or rank, disorderly.²⁵

²⁵ James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2001), G814.

It can mean idleness²⁶ or slackness.²⁷

This would be a brother, a Christian, who is living out of order, disorderly, slack. According to the context, he would be out of order by not working.

NOTE: This teaching might be new to some in your group, but help them to understand what the outcome of keeping away from such a brother is—to correct him.

How do verses 7-9 explain what Paul meant?

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy didn't act in an undisciplined manner when they were with the Thessalonians. That's the example.

“act in an undisciplined manner / idle”
atakteo, from the same root word as “unruly.”—“*To be out of order, be remiss*”²⁸
“*Be idle or lazy, evade one's responsibilities.*”²⁹

They didn't eat anyone's bread without paying for it.

With labor and hardship (ESV—toil and labor), they kept working night and day so they weren't a burden to anyone.

The example Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy left when with them was working to pay for their own bread. They didn't take advantage of the Thessalonians feeding them. They wanted to be an example to them, not a burden.

What do the cross-references say about examples?

1 Thessalonians 2:5-12

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy worked when they were with the Thessalonians so they wouldn't be a burden to them. They gave the new believers an example.

Philippians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 11:1

These are two other places where Paul called fellow believers to follow his example and that of those who held the standard, Christ.

²⁶ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

²⁷ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), p. 174.

²⁸ Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998), G812.

²⁹ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), p. 80.

How do verses 10-12 fit with verses 6-9?

This was not a new command for the church.

If anyone doesn't work, then he shouldn't eat what others work for.

Paul heard that there were some like that. They were undisciplined / idle and acting like busybodies.

“acting like busybodies”
periergazomai—“to be working round about, instead of at one's own business
(*peri*, ‘around,’ *ergon*, ‘work’)”³⁰

Paul commanded and exhorted them to work in quiet fashion (ESV—do their work quietly) and eat their own bread (ESV—earn their own living).

Why work, according to the cross-references?

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

A believer's ambition in the area of work should be to lead a quiet life, attend to his own business—as opposed to being a busybody—and work with his hands.

1 Timothy 5:3-5, 8

To provide for one's widowed mother or grandmother
To provide for one's relatives, family / household

You can ask your group what they learned about work that they need to practice.

Lead the discussion back to 2 Thessalonians 3.

Verses 14-15

What other commands did Paul write?

Pay attention to anyone who doesn't obey what's in this letter. Don't associate with (ESV—have nothing to do with) such a person, so he'll be ashamed.

Admonish / warn him as a brother, not an enemy.

How do the cross-references compare with this?

1 Corinthians 5:1-13 and 15:33

Clean out the sin among believers before it affects others. The Corinthians were admonished for being tolerant and arrogant of sin in their church, and that is still an admonition for churches now.

³⁰ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), p. 85.

In this situation the man was a “so-called” brother, a wicked man. He was to be put out of the church so that he might be saved and so that sin didn’t spread within the church.

Christians are to judge those who are inside the church. God judges those outside.

Bad company corrupts good morals.

Matthew 18:15-17

Jesus told how to correct a brother who sins.

Go to your him in private. If he listens, he is won / gained.

If he doesn’t listen, go back to him and take two or more.

If he doesn’t listen, tell the church.

If he doesn’t listen, let him be as a Gentile and tax collector—Jews did not associate with them.

Romans 16:17-19

Turn away / avoid from those who cause dissensions / divisions and hindrances / create obstacles.

Galatians 6:1

Use gentleness when restoring a brother caught in trespass / transgression. There is also a warning against the one restoring being tempted.

Is this admonishing still to be practiced in church today? What happens when it is? You might ask if anyone in your group has an example to share briefly.

Verses 16-18

What did Paul say as he closed this letter?

Peace from the Lord

Paul’s distinguishing mark (ESV—sign of genuineness) in his letters

Grace from the Lord

Why did the Thessalonians need peace and grace?

Suffering

False teaching

Some unruly, undisciplined

To end this discussion, you can ask your group what lessons for life they learned from studying 2 Thessalonians.

