

AWAITING THE DAY

1 THESSALONIANS



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LETTER

Dear church,

It's easy for us to get trapped in the patterns and rhythms of life. Day to day, week to week, year to year. From one thing to the next, we keep our heads down and try to keep carrying on while our world promises proper satisfaction is just around the corner, yet always just out of reach. God promises something much greater for us. Through the death of Jesus and the granting of his Spirit, he has guaranteed us a place in sinless, and pain free and eternal life, assured now but not fully realised until Jesus returns. With our heads down in the regularity of the day-to-day it's difficult to maintain focus on this ultimate goal, but this is exactly what Paul commends the Thessalonians for and what he prays they'll continue in.

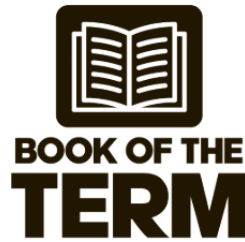
And we share this same hope for WBC as we study 1 Thessalonians this term. Our prayer through these seven weeks is that we'd be reminded of the goodness of the gospel, lifting our eyes toward the end, and spurred on to live the life Christ as called us to. We pray that we'd be exhorted to live holy and godly lives filled with love and conviction and encouraged to make our daily rhythm one that awaits Jesus' return. Side by side, our aim is to be a church that directs our vision to God's purpose for his creation, a purpose that finds its culmination in Jesus' coming and the new life he will bring.

Your brother in Christ,

Michael

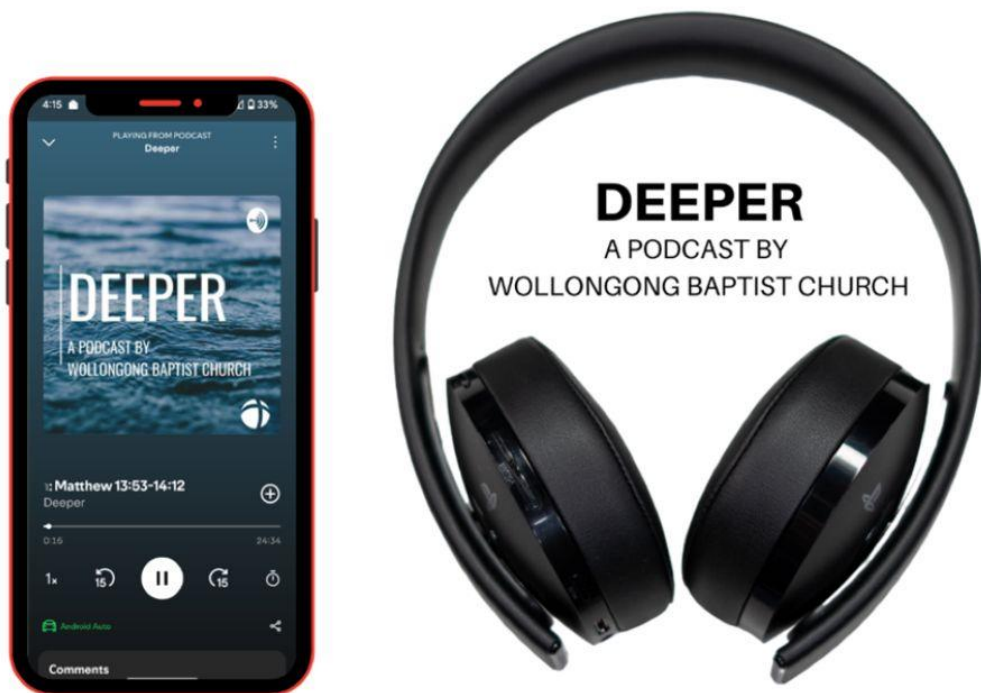
²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:23



Available for a donation of \$15 in the foyer after each service.

Life is full of periods of waiting and our culture has taught us to struggle with this. In this book, author Mark Vroegop challenges and equips Christians to take a biblical approach to waiting, recognising the sovereignty of God over all moments of life. With thoughtful insights and helpful practicalities, this is a great read for growth in finding rest and comfort in periods of peace and periods of uncertainty.



Have you listened to the Deeper podcast? Each week we dive deeper into the Bible as our pastors are interviewed about the biblical passage preached on Sunday, giving space for follow-up questions. Studying 1 Thessalonians will give us a clear directive to be pursuing growth in holiness, so whether you listen while you travel, while you do jobs around the house, or while you exercise, tune in to delve further into God's wisdom for us!

Listen on the church website
or also available at:



Have a question for Deeper?
Ask it here:



MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS

If our aim is to shift the focus of our daily rhythm to one which is ready for Jesus' return at any moment, one potential way to help achieve this is through a regular pattern of prayer. The morning and evening prayers printed over the next seven pages were written by puritans (faithful Christians of years gone by) and are focused on setting oneself for the day ahead and reflecting on the day that's been. Some of the language sounds old, but the spiritual truth that comes through these words is still relevant today.

Throughout this series, you can practice the habit of daily prayer by using these prayers to shape your own time with God. Maybe you'd like to pray the same morning and evening prayer every day for a week, and then move on to the next set? Or maybe you could pray a different set every day, and then repeat that for the seven weeks of our series?

You can also use these prayers in your Home Groups. During your set aside time for prayer where you pray for each other and the things learned and applied from the Bible passage, you could take one of these morning/evening prayers (depending on what time of day your group meets) and use it to shape and flavour your shared time speaking to God together.

Whether individually or all together, let's turn conviction into practice as we await the day of Jesus' return.

FIRST MORNING PRAYER

Compassionate Lord,

Your mercies have brought me to the dawn of another day, vain will be its gift unless I grow in grace, increase in knowledge, ripen for spiritual harvest. Let me this day know you as you are, love you supremely, serve you wholly, admire you fully. Through grace let my will respond to you, knowing that power to obey is not in me, but that your free love alone enables me to serve you. Here is my blind understanding, chase away its mists of ignorance. O ever watchful shepherd, lead, guide, tend me this day. Amen.

FIRST EVENING PRAYER

O lover of your people,

You have placed my whole being in the hands of Jesus, my redeemer, commander, husband, friend, and you care for me in him. Keep me holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. May I not know the voice of strangers, but to go to him where he is and follow where he leads. You have bathed me once for all in the sin-removing fountain, cleanse me now from this day's defilement, from its faults, deficiencies of virtue, harmful extremes, that I may exhibit a perfect character in Jesus. O Master, who did wash the disciples' feet, be very patient with me, be very condescending to my faults, go on with me till your great work in me is complete. Amen

SECOND MORNING PRAYER

O God, the author of all good,

I come to you for the grace another day will require for its duties and events. I step out into a wicked world, I carry about with me an evil heart. I know that without you I can do nothing, that everything with which I shall be concerned, however harmless in itself, may prove an occasion of sin or folly unless I am kept by your power. Hold me up and I shall be safe. Preserve my understanding from subtilty of error, my affections from idols, my character from stain of vice, my profession from every form of evil. And to you be the glory. Amen.

SECOND EVENING PRAYER

Giver of all,

Another day is ended and I take my place beneath my great redeemer's cross, where healing streams continually descend, where balm is poured into every wound, where I wash anew in the all-cleansing blood, assured that you see in me no spots of sin. Yet a little while and I shall go to your home and be no more seen. Help me to gird up the loins of my mind, to quicken my step, to speed as if each moment were my last, that my life be joy, my death be glory. I bring my tribute of thanks for spiritual graces, the full warmth of faith, the cheering presence of your Spirit, the strength of your restraining will, your spiking of hell's artillery. Blessed be my sovereign Lord! Amen.

THIRD MORNING PRAYER

Almighty God,

As I cross the threshold of this day I commit myself, soul, body, affairs, friends, to your care. Watch over, keep, guide, direct, sanctify, bless me. Incline my heart to your ways. Mould me wholly into the image of Jesus, as a potter forms clay. May my lips be a well-tuned harp to sound your praise. May I view all things in the mirror of eternity, waiting for the coming of the Lord, listening for the last trumpet call, hastening unto the new heaven and earth. If my life should end today, let this be my best day. Amen.

THIRD EVENING PRAYER

My Father,

If your mercy had bounds, where would be my refuge from just wrath? But your love in Christ is without measure. Enter not into judgement with me, for I plead no righteousness of my own, and have no cloak for iniquity. Pardon my day dark with evil. This night I renew my penitence. Every morning I vow to serve you more sincerely, to be more devoted in life, to be wholly yours. Yet I soon stumble, backslide, and have to confess my weakness, misery and sin. But I bless you that the finished work of Jesus needs no addition from my doings, that his oblation is sufficient satisfaction for my sins. O help me to set an upright example that will ever rebuke vice, allure to goodness, and evidence that lovely are the ways of Christ. Amen.

FOURTH MORNING PRAYER

O Lord,

We give you our heartfelt thanks that you have elected, created, redeemed, called, justified us, and sanctified us in good measure in this life; and given us an assured hope that you will glorify us in your heavenly kingdom when this mortal life has ended. We praise you for preserving us this past night from all that dangers that might have befallen us. Seeing you have brought us safely through the night, we ask you to protect and direct us through the day. Provide us the things which you, O Father, know we need. And grant that we may so pass through the pilgrimage of this short life that our hearts do not settle on transitory things. May our souls every day be more and more ravished with love of our true home, your everlasting kingdom. Amen.

FOURTH EVENING PRAYER

O Lord,

I render to you from the alter of my heart all possible thanks for all the blessings and benefits you have so graciously and plenteously bestowed; especially that you have defended me this day now past from all perils and danger, both of body and soul, furnishing me with all necessary good things. May my weary body be refreshed by sleep that I may be the better enabled to walk before you, doing all the good works you have appointed for me. Hasten, O Father, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Make me ever mindful of my final end and of the reckoning that I am then to make to you. In the meanwhile, make me careful so to follow Christ that I may share with Christ in the resurrection of righteousness. Amen

FIFTH MORNING PRAYER

O Lord,

we will sing aloud of your mercy in the morning, for you have been our defence. Because of your mercy, O Lord, we are not consumed, for your compassions never fail; they are new every morning, great is your faithfulness. Let the morning bring us word of your unfailing love, for we have put our trust in you. Show us the way we should go, for we lift up our souls to you. Teach us to do your will, for you are our God. May your good Spirit lead us on level ground. Lord, watch over our coming and going, both now and for evermore. And give us grace to do the works of this day, as the duty of the day requires. Amen

FIFTH EVENING PRAYER

Blessed Creator,

You have promised your beloved sleep. Give me restoring rest needful for tomorrow's toil. If dreams be mine, let them not be tinged with evil. Let your Spirit make my time of repose a blessed temple of his holy presence. May my frequent lying down make me familiar with death, the bed I approach remind me of the grave, the eyes I now close picture to me their final closing. Keep me always ready, waiting for admittance to your presence. Weaken my attachment to earthly things. May I hold life loosely in my hand, knowing that I receive it on condition of its surrender. Permit me to commit myself to you, awake or asleep. Amen.

SIXTH MORNING PRAYER

Eternal Lord,

You are the great fountain of being and of happiness. As from you my being was derived, so from you my happiness directly flows. To you may my waking thoughts be directed. May my first actions be consecrated to you, O God, who gives me, as it were, every morning a new life. Enable my heart to pour out itself before you with a filial reverence, freedom, and endearment. May I read your word with attention and pleasure, and may my soul be delivered into its mould. Animated by the great motives in your word, may I renew my dedication to you through Jesus Christ your beloved Son. May I derive from him new supplies of your Spirit, whose influences are the life of my soul. Amen.

SIXTH EVENING PRAYER

O Son of God and Son of Man,

You, incarnate, did suffer, rise, ascend for my sake. Your departure was not a token of separation but a pledge of return. Your word, promises, sacraments, show your death until you come again. That day is no horror to me, for your death has redeemed me. Your Spirit fills me, your love animates me, your word governs me. I have trusted you and you have not betrayed my trust; waited for you and not waited in vain. You will come to raise my body from the dust and re-unite it to my soul by a wonderful work of infinite power and love, greater than that which bounds the oceans' waters, ebbs and flows the tides, keeps the stars in their courses, and gives life to all creatures. O God, keep me in this faith, and ever looking for Christ's return. Amen.

SEVENTH MORNING PRAYER

God of my end,

No hours pass away with so much pleasure as those spent in communion with you and with my heart. O how desirable, how profitable to the Christian life is a spirit of holy watchfulness and godly jealousy over myself, when my soul is afraid of nothing except grieving and offending you, the blessed God, my Father and friend, whom I then love and long to please rather than be happy in myself! I long to fill all my time for you, whether at home or in the way. To place all my concerns in your hands, to be entirely at your disposal, have no will or interest of my own. Help me to live to you for ever, to make you my last and only end, so that I may never more in one instance love my sinful self. Amen.

SEVENTH EVENING PRAYER

God of the passing hour,

Another week has gone and I have been preserved in my going out, in my coming in. Yours has been the vigilance that has turned threatened evils aside; yours the supplies that have nourished me; yours the comforts that have indulged me; yours the relations and friends that have delighted me; yours the means of grace which have edified me; yours the book, which, amidst all my enjoyments, has told me that this is not my rest, that in all successes one thing alone is needful, to love my saviour. I pray to be clothed with humility, to be quickened in your way, to be more devoted to you, to keep the end of my life in view, to be cured of the folly of delay and indecision, to know how frail I am, to number my days and apply my heart unto wisdom. Amen.

BACKGROUND TO 1 THESSALONIANS



1 Thessalonians is a letter from the Apostle Paul and his co-workers in the gospel (Silas and Timothy), to the church they established in the Macedonian city of Thessalonica. The background to this church and the letter can be found in Acts 17:1-9, where Paul and his co-writers were with the Thessalonians for a short time before being driven out of the city by a mob. Overwhelmed with concern for the fledgling church they left behind, Paul and Silas sent Timothy back to check on them, only to learn that the gathering of new Christians was standing firm in the faith and even flourishing (1 Thess 2:17-3:6)! As a result, Paul, Silas and Timothy wrote to express their gratitude to God, to commend the Thessalonians for their faith, and to encourage them to continue on as they had been: living in holiness while they await the day of Jesus' return.

This posture of living with eyes toward the future is not unique to 1 Thessalonians or the New Testament. Through the Old Testament prophets, God warned his people of the coming *Day of the LORD*, an event through which he would bring just judgement on all sin *and* bring about restorative renewal through his Messiah (Is 2:12; 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Joel 2:11; Zeph 3:8-10). This *Day of the LORD*, then, comes with Jesus, where God himself entered into creation! On the cross he dealt with sin once and for all and having been raised he is the first fruits of the coming resurrection and promise of perfect restoration. But while "The Day" has clearly begun, it's not over until Jesus returns, bringing final judgement and ushering in the eternal new creation.

This cataclysmic return is what Paul calls "the day of the Lord" and it's what he wants the Thessalonians to be actively waiting for (5:1-11). This state of readiness is part of what marks the Thessalonians as Christians (1:9-10) and is kept up through steadfast faith and holy living (3:13; 5:23). In this letter, we see that to await Jesus' return is to live lives pleasing to God, to persevere through persecution and hardship and to reflect the goodness of the gospel expressed through love. This is what the Thessalonians are doing, and it's what Paul wants to encourage them to keep doing more and more.

SERMON NOTES – 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

19th OF OCTOBER

HOME GROUP STUDY – 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

1. Who have you looked to as a role model? What made you want to be like them?

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

2. What are Paul, Silas and Timothy thankful to God for in verses 2 and 3? What does this tell you about the Thessalonians?
3. What stands out to you about how the gospel came to the Thessalonians and how they received it? Are there any similarities to when you first accepted it?
4. How is it that Paul and his co-writers can know that the Thessalonians are chosen by God?

5. What does this mean for us? Do you have this same recognition for yourself and for others at church?
6. The message of the gospel “rang out” from the Thessalonians once they turned to God. Would you say this is true about yourself? What about WBC? How can we help each other to be a church that rings out the good news of Jesus?
7. Key to living as a Christian is waiting for the return of Jesus. What will happen when he comes and in what ways do you think it should shape what we do now? (See Matthew 16:27; 24:29-31).
8. It’s been two thousand years and Jesus hasn’t yet returned. What kind of difficulties does this present to us who still wait? How can we be helping each other to continue to actively and faithfully await him?

SERMON NOTES – 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-16

26th OF OCTOBER

HOME GROUP STUDY – 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-16

1. How can you tell when a person is genuine in what they say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

2. Paul, Silas and Timothy describe what drove them to share the gospel with the Thessalonians and how they shared it. What do you notice about their motives and their methods?
3. Would you say that you have the same strength of motivation to share the gospel as Paul? Why/why not?
4. When God gives you an opportunity to tell people about Jesus, how do you go about it?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

5. In 1:5 Paul describes how the gospel came to the Thessalonians in word and Spirit. How does 2:13 build upon your understanding of this?
6. Verses 14 to 16 speak about the persecution of believers. What does Paul say about the persecuted? What does he say about the persecutors?
7. While some may, many of us don't face the same kind of persecution of the Thessalonian church or the churches in Judea. What kind of persecution are we likely to face in our context? How can these verses help us to endure?
8. What resonates with you about Paul's delivery of the gospel and the Thessalonians' reception of it? What are the things you need to change or the things you've been reminded of?

SERMON NOTES – 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-3:13

2nd OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY – 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-3:13

1. In what ways do people show their concern for those they love?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

2. What strikes you about the way Paul, Silas and Timothy speak in these verses? How does it add to your understanding of their relationship with the Thessalonians we've seen so far?
3. What do you think verses 19 and 20 mean? How might this shape the way we await the next life?
4. How do Paul and his co-writers convey their concern for the Thessalonians in these verses? What steps can we take to cultivate that same concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

5. How might the Thessalonians have been encouraged by Timothy's visit? In turn, how are they an encouragement to Paul?

6. What do you think verse 8 means? What does it suggest about the impact the faith of fellow believers ought to have on our lives?

7. Why does Paul pray for what he does in verses 11 to 13? What cues can we take from this prayer for the way we live and the way we pray?

8. What will you do this week to show your love and concern for the perseverance of brother or sister at WBC?

SERMON NOTES – 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

9th OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY – 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

1. Who do those around us tend to live for? What kinds of figures do people shape their words, actions, and even lifestyles around?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

2. What do you notice about the instructions Paul, Silas and Timothy give to the Thessalonians? What is the aim in following them?
3. Paul and his co-writers acknowledge that the Thessalonians are already living faithfully. Why do you think they instruct them to do what they're already doing?
4. What do you think verse 8 means? What's at stake if we're indifferent to or decide not to live the life described in these verses?

5. What does this mean for how you view the Christian life? Are there particular elements of a holy life pleasing to God that you have neglected, or any that you'd like to work on doing "more and more"?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

6. What do these verses reveal about the way to relate to those inside and outside the church?
7. What do you think it might look like for us to "lead a quiet life" and "win the respect of outsiders" today?
8. While we await the return of Jesus, how can we encourage one another to holy living as individuals, among one another, and towards outsiders?

SERMON NOTES – 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

16th OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY – 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

1. Generally speaking, how do people think about death?
How does this affect the way they live?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

2. When Paul, Silas and Timothy speak about those who are “asleep” in these verses, they’re speaking about believers who have died. Within the frame of awaiting Jesus’ return, why might death present as a problem?
3. Two thousand years after the Thessalonians had to grapple with this issue, we know that believers who die will be called to Jesus at his return. But this doesn’t mean death is simple or pleasant for us. What issues does it still present?
4. Why don’t we need to “grieve like the rest of mankind”? What impact does this have on the way you view life and death?

5. What strikes you about the way Paul and his co-writers describe the appearing of Jesus?
6. Other parts of the Bible describe this event similarly (e.g. Matt 16:27; Jn 14:1-4; Acts 1:9-11). Why do you think it's an essential element of gospel proclamation?
7. Do you include Jesus' return when you talk to others about him? How might you frame it next time God gives you an opportunity?
8. Verse 18 says to "encourage one another with these words." What effect would this have on our church if we commit to doing this? How might we do this with each other at WBC?

SERMON NOTES – 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

23rd OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY – 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

1. Think back to a significant moment in your life (a big exam, a wedding, a job interview, etc.). What did you need to do to prepare for this event? What might have happened if you didn't?
2. Paul, Silas and Timothy describe the Day of the Lord coming like a "thief in the night". What do you think this means?
3. What does this mean for us as we await that day?
4. Regarding the return of Jesus, what differences do these verses detail between believers and unbelievers?

Believers	Unbelievers

5. In one sentence, how would you explain the way these verses describe what it looks like to await the day of the Lord?
6. Are you living this way? What are the parts of your life in which you're "awake/sober" and the parts in which you're "asleep/drunk"?
7. Verse 9 describes how believers are appointed by God for salvation through Jesus. How does this act of God square with our responsibility to wait in readiness?
8. Like the previous section, this one ends with a command to "encourage one another". How can we use these verses to do this? What words and actions can you use to foster a culture of expectant readiness for Jesus' return at WBC?

SERMON NOTES – 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-28

30th OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY – 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-28

1. What might a typical secular person think happens in a church? What sorts of things do you think a church should do?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

2. What do Paul, Silas and Timothy ask the Thessalonians to do in verses 12 and 13? How do you think we go with this in our church?
3. What responsibilities are the Thessalonians given in verses 14 and 15? What significance do they have when considered in light of the wait for Jesus' return?
4. What do these verses reveal about whose role it is to care for those in the church? How would it impact WBC if we all accept these same responsibilities?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-28

5. In verses 16-18 Paul and his co-writers summarise God's will for believers in this life. How do you go with these three things? Pick one you'd particularly like to grow in and discuss how you might work on it.

6. What do you think verses 19 to 22 mean? What do you think it looks like to obey these commands faithfully?

7. Paul begins the close of the letter with a short prayer for the Thessalonians in verses 23 and 24. What can we take from this to shape our own prayers in what we ask God for?

8. Reflect back on the letter of 1 Thessalonians and what we've covered through the series. Name one key thing you're going remember or put into practice to help you faithfully await the day of Jesus' return.