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JANUARY 2009

TEACHING PLANS

AN EXPLORATION OF THE BOOKS OF 1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS

WHAT IS FAITH ALL ABOUT?

This issue we're exploring what it truly means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Whether you're new to this whole Christianity thing or have known Christ for a while, you probably have a lot of questions—a lot of the time. The apostle Paul traveled to Macedonia (now modern-day northern Greece) to share this message of Christ with the people in the city of Thessalonica. These books are his writings to these new converts, teaching them what it meant to live their new faith. Paul's advice is just as relevant to us today.

WHAT'S INSIDE ...

The goal of the *Collegiate* online features is to bring you a structured teaching plan with additional helps and relevant questions to equip you to lead a strong discussion-based lesson. Here's a breakdown of what's inside: *Getting Started* helps introduce the topic and get your students engaged in the lesson. *Need to Knows* highlights the main characters, historical context, and key verses of each lesson. *Explore the Bible* leads your students through the Scripture passages of the lesson, helping them understand the text, its historical and cultural context, and what it means to them today. *Apply to Life* gives you ideas for furthering the application of the Scripture, so students can take active steps to process what they're learning and how it impacts their lives. Be sure you also utilize the commentary provided (threadsmedia.com/collegiate) to help with your preparation and personal study of the lessons.

As always, we're here for you. Please send us your questions, thoughts, and suggestions. Let us know what we could do better and how these teaching plans could be even more relevant to your students and your ministry.

Waiting to hear from you,

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editor in chief of Threads
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70 sheets/college ruled
11x8½in/27.9x21.5cm

notebook

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 34 OF THE FALL ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "I'M LETTING GO" BY FRANCESCA BATTISTELLI, FROM THE ALBUM *MY PAPER HEART*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

CHARACTERS¹

PAUL—a missionary, theologian, and writer. He wrote 13 epistles that are a part of the New Testament. His conversion and missionary journeys are detailed in the Book of Acts. The focus of Paul's message in all of his letters is the teachings and life of Jesus Christ.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Thessalonica was the largest city in first-century Macedonia and the capital of the province. The church there was established by Paul, Silas, and Timothy (Acts 17:4). Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians in large part to educate the new Christians on some of the aspects of the Christian faith. The letter is dated around A.D. 50, making it one of the earliest of Paul's letters.

FOCAL PASSAGES

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

KEY VERSES

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all background information is from *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003).



HONORING GOD WITH MY LIFE

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "I'm Letting Go" by Francesca Battistelli playing in the background as students arrive.

Research the current top 5 best selling movies, iTunes downloads, and books. Share this info with your group.

- What do these products reveal about our culture's stance on relationships?
- Sex?
- Money?
- Judging by the top selling products, how does our society differ from God's plan for our lives?

DIG DEEPER

Found on page 34 of *Collegiate* magazine:

Avenger (Greek: *ekdikos*) — "carrying justice out; a punisher." In later Greek it came to mean "he who brings to pass what he believes to be his right." Only in Romans 13:4 and 1 Thessalonians 4:6 is this word connected with God.

For more about the love of God and love for people Paul describes in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10a, read "The Impractical Nature of Love" on pages 14-17.

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 35 OF THE FALL ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONGS "WALK IN JERUSALEM" BY MAHALIA JACKSON, FROM THE ALBUM *THE BEST OF MAHALIA JACKSON*, AND "RESURRECT ME" BY JON FOREMAN, FROM THE ALBUM *SUMMER-EP*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Future Hope—The New Testament writers repeatedly describe a hope they have in the future return of Christ (e.g. Matt. 24:50; Luke 12:46; Titus 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:12-14). This hope is a hope in both the event of Jesus' coming and in Jesus Himself, and is motivation for Christians to live holy, God-honoring lives while waiting for Jesus' return.

FOCAL PASSAGES

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

KEY VERSES

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16-17



PUT YOUR HOPE IN JESUS

GETTING STARTED

Have the songs "Walk in Jerusalem" by Mahalia Jackson and "Resurrect Me" by Jon Foreman playing in the background as students arrive.

Death is a heavy subject for an entire lesson. Be sensitive to your class. The odds are that someone in your group is dealing with this issue. I suggest opening on a humorous note.

Cultural analysis on death:

- "Grim reaper" provides 3.2 million google hits.
- As of 2007, 37 states allow millionaires to leave trust funds to their pets.
- You are more likely to be killed by a champagne cork than by a spider.
- Disney World has recently become a popular place to dump your loved one's ashes. Employees have to undergo special training to remove discarded remains.

DIG DEEPER

Found on page 35 of *Collegiate* magazine:

"Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." (Hebrews 10:23)

Verses to check out:

- 1 Corinthians 15 — on bodily resurrection
- Revelation 19:11-21 — on the second coming of Christ
- Revelation 20:1-10 — on the Millennial reign of Christ

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1). BE BOLD WITH HOPE IN CHRIST (1 THESS. 4:13).

READ 1 THESS. 4:13.

¹³We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.

Questions naturally arise when we face our own death and also the death of those we love.

- How do you think that today's culture approaches death?
- Do college students in general usually think about dying?
- How would you compare/contrast the Biblical view of death with that of our culture?
- How does losing someone you love change your perception of death?
- Why does Paul tell us not to grieve like the world?

Lined writing area for notes and reflections.



EXPLORE THE BIBLE

2). REST IN CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND RETURN (1 THESS. 4:14).

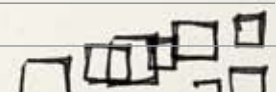
READ 1 THESS.4:14.

¹⁴Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.

Christ completely wiped out death for us on the cross. We are only temporarily separated.

- How does the cross completely change our experience with death?
- Why does Paul refer to deceased believers as “those who have fallen asleep”?

Handwritten notes and lines for writing.



EXPLORE THE BIBLE

3). ENCOURAGE OTHERS WITH HOPE (1 THESS. 4:18).

READ 1 THESS. 4:18.

¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words.

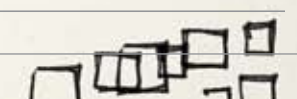
Paul tells us to take what he has said and use it to encourage each other.

- When would it be fitting to use this passage to encourage a friend?
- Do you know someone right now who is facing death or the death of a loved one?

These verses extend to situations beyond death and dying.

- When you know that death is temporary, how does that change how you live?

Handwriting practice lines consisting of two columns of horizontal lines. The left column has 20 lines and the right column has 20 lines.



→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 36 OF THE FALL ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.

NEED TO KNOWS

FOCAL PASSAGES

EXODUS 20:13; 21:22-25; 22:21-24

DEUTERONOMY 24:19

MATTHEW 5:21-22

LUKE 20:47



VALUE ALL OF HUMAN LIFE

GETTING STARTED

The issue of respecting human life is so much larger than just the pro-life/pro-choice debate. Far too often the issue stops there, but every day we're surrounded by other people—God's children created in His image—and He has commanded us to respect the life that He gives. Not only should we respect life, we should encourage others and help them realize their true value.

Open with a discussion:

- “You can measure the strength of a society by how it treats its weakest members.” Do you agree with that statement?
- What types of people do you consider to be the “weakest” in our society? [Possible answers may include: children, elderly, mentally or physically handicapped, homeless, abused, etc.]

DIG DEEPER

Found on page 36 of *Collegiate* magazine:

“Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.” –Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision

Get Involved: In every area of life and every country across the globe, people are desperate for someone to intercede on their behalf. For more information on how to join in the reformation, read “Java and Justice” on pages 18-20.

Verses to check out:

- 1 Samuel 2:8
- Isaiah 1:17
- Isaiah 61:1
- Micah 6:6-8
- Zechariah 7:9-10
- Luke 6:38
- Romans 8:19-21

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 37 OF THE FALL ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "PEOPLE GET READY" BY KEVIN MAX, FROM THE ALBUM *THE BLOOD*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE DAY OF THE LORD described in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 is a time of judgment on both the wicked and the righteous. This period of time is mentioned by many Old Testament prophets. A few include:

- Isaiah 13:9-11 — the wicked
- Joel 2:28-32 — the righteous
- Zephaniah 1:14-18 — the wicked
- Zephaniah 3:14-15 — the righteous

FOCAL PASSAGES

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

KEY VERSES

1 THESSALONIANS 5:9-11

STAY AWAKE AND BE READY

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "People Get Ready" by Kevin Max playing in the background as students arrive.

Divide up girls and guys on opposite sides of the room. Give each a piece of paper. Ask the following questions about weddings and have each group respond according to their preference.

1. After you get engaged, what is the first step in planning your wedding?
2. How much money does a big wedding usually cost?
3. If you had to pick one, would you rather have a.) limo to the reception, b.) expensive dress/tux, c.) awesome live band?
4. What flavor wedding cake is best?
5. What is most essential: a.) invitations b.) flowers c.) music?
6. Writing your own vows is a.) romantic and original, or b.) cheesy and awkward.
7. What will it be like to see your bride/groom for the first time on your wedding day?

Compare how guys' answers differ from girls'. Make the point that no matter what opinions you have about the ceremony, weddings are incredible celebrations, full of

joy and new beginnings. Weddings also require months of hard work and planning. Discuss how the Bible compares Christ's second coming to a wedding celebration. Christ is the groom, and the church is His bride, daily preparing for her glorious day.

- How is Christ's second coming like a wedding ceremony?

DIG DEEPER

Found on page 37 of *Collegiate* magazine:

Verses to check out on the hope we have in Christ's return:

- 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
- Titus 2:13
- 1 John 3:2-3

You can read the rest of Jonathan Edwards' resolutions at apuritansmind.com. Consider reading several from the list for your group today.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1). RECALL WHAT YOU KNOW (1 THESS. 5:1-3).

READ 1 THESS. 5:1-3.

¹About the times and the seasons: brothers, you do not need anything to be written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³When they say, "Peace and security," then sudden destruction comes on them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

- Why do you think God doesn't let us know when He will return?
- What do people gain by trying to predict Jesus' return?
- What is the difference between "work of faith" and work coming from our own strength?
- Would your life change if you knew Jesus was returning in one year? One week? Tomorrow?
- What kinds of things would you try to accomplish?

Handwritten scribbles at the top center: □ □ □ □ □

Two columns of horizontal lines for writing.

