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a *Grace Notes* course

## Foundations I

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Foundations 108

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## Foundations I

### Foundations 108

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## Lesson 21 – Getting Familiar with the Book

This Section will introduce the student to a practical method of preparing a Bible lesson. This method is based on principles that many teachers have used to effectively teach the Word of God. Although methods of preparation may vary, the basic principles of interpretation studied in the last section must be followed.

Consider first the importance of academic discipline as we prepare this lesson and realize that academic discipline can not and should not attempt to take the place of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Person of the Holy Spirit is He who will “lead us into all truth” (John 16:13). No method designed by man can validly make that guarantee.

We must always walk by faith, no matter how knowledgeable of God’s Word we may become (Col 2:6). Christian maturity does not come by fleshly pursuit, but instead by faith (Gal 3:2-5). Satan will subtly attack us by trying to get us to trust our method and knowledge more than we trust the Holy Spirit (John 5:39-47). Knowledge without Christian love, however, will simply lead to arrogance, which is a characteristic of immaturity (1 Cor 8:1).

No matter what we seek to do in the Christian life, we must always begin with prayer including confession of sins (1 Cor 11:31; Prov 28:13; 1 John 1:9), and then continue to pray. We must pray for concentration, understanding, and retention of what we learn before beginning any lesson.

We will now use the Basic Principles of Interpretation that we learned in Section II to study 1 Thessalonians.

After selecting a book to study, we should first read it through several times casually, as if it were a newspaper article, or just another book. This step is designed simply to acquaint us with the basic content of the book, and is not designed to answer any deep theological questions.

Reading the book through quickly a few times will help us get some idea of the flow of the major topics and context. We must remember to interpret contextually, considering the Immediate,

Intermediate, and Remote Contexts. Going through a book verse-by-verse is the only way to understand the Immediate and Intermediate Contexts.

We also need to become familiar with the history and geography associated with the various books of the Bible. This study will consider 1 Thessalonians. To assist the student, we have provided some background information on the city of Thessalonica. This type of information must be obtained from extra-Biblical sources. Books called Bible Dictionaries and Bible Introductions are helpful sources of this information.

### A. Thessalonica’s Geography and History.

Thessalonica was a seaport located at the head of the Thermaic Gulf in the northwest corner of the Aegean Sea of modern day Greece. It was located in the Roman province of Macedonia and was noted for its hot springs and its shipyard - where large ships could dock. It was the largest and most prosperous city of Macedonia in its day.

Thessalonica was founded about 315 B.C. by Cassander, the son of Antipater, shortly after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. After Alexander’s death there was a tremendous power struggle. Antipater was loyal to the royal family, naming the city after his son Cassander’s wife, Thessalonica, who was also the half-sister of Alexander the Great.

Thessalonica was a city of commerce made up primarily of Greeks, but with an influential Jewish community. Today it is the Greek City of Salonika.

### B. Historical Background of the Church. Acts 17:1-9

The church was established on Paul’s Second Missionary Journey as a result of his Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9). Paul was accompanied by Silas (which was his Hebrew name – Silvanus was his Roman name), Timothy, and Luke. They were traveling along the Ignation Way which connected the east to the west. The group arrived in Thessalonica after visiting the cities of Philippi, Amphipolis, and Apollonia (Acts 17:1).

Paul taught in the synagogue for three Sabbaths (Acts 17:2) with the message that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, and therefore was the

Messiah (Acts 17:3). Many were converted as a result of this message (Acts 17:4).

Paul also spent an unspecified amount of time teaching new converts. As a result, the unbelieving Jews became jealous, formed a mob and went after the evangelistic team (Acts 17:5). The mob went to the house of Jason to get Paul, who was not there (Acts 17:6), so they dragged Jason before the magistrates, and there distorted Paul’s teaching about Jesus (Acts 17:7).

Opposition became so fierce that Paul and his group had to flee to Berea (Acts 17:8-10).

C. The Time of Writing and the Reason.

The Second Missionary Journey began in 49 A.D. after Paul had taught at Antioch. After leaving Thessalonica, Paul taught briefly at Berea and then Athens before going to Corinth where he stayed for 18 months (Acts 18:11). Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica for a progress report on the new church (1 Thess 3:2). Timothy’s report was favorable and the result was this book. This indicates that Thessalonians was written about 50 A.D. It was the second of Paul’s writings (the first was Galatians).

So we begin our study by becoming familiar with the book.

**Lesson 22 – Make an Outline of the Book**

When we are ready to take a closer look at the book, we must begin by making an outline. What we need to do is start with the big picture, then analyze smaller and smaller pieces of that picture. The logic is obvious; the closer and longer we look at a very elaborate picture, the more detail we will be able to appreciate. God’s word is much the same way. The big picture is Jesus Christ Himself. The written Word is a revelation of the Living Word (John 5:39-47). As we look closer and closer we can see more details of the person of Christ.

We must never get so entangled in the details that we fail to realize the context of the big picture. If we do we will, “strain out a gnat and swallow a camel” (Matt 23:24), which means we will miss the truly important things.

When making an outline of the book, our first job is to determine how the text is organized into paragraph divisions. Many Bible translations have a way of noting these divisions in the text.

Commonly, translations highlight the number of the first verse of a paragraph with bold print. Read the introduction to the translation you are using to see whether and how the translators have marked the paragraphs. If such divisions are not marked, proceed anyway noting where topic changes happen.

For example, 1 Thessalonians paragraph divisions are as follows: 1:1; 1:2-10; 2:1-12; 2:13-16; 2:17-20; 3:1-10; 3:11-13; 4:1-8; 4:9-12; 4:13-18; 5:1-11; 5:12-22; 5:23-28.

Next, give each paragraph a title. As we study the book more deeply, our outline will probably change as we come to see more of the content. At this point we won’t dwell long on these titles. Our task is to be informative, yet be as simple as possible.

PARAGRAPH	TITLE
A 1:1	
B 1:2-10	
C 2:1-12	
D 2:13-16	
E 2:17-20	
F 3:1-10	
G 3:11-13	
H 4:1-8	
I 4:9-12	
J 4:13-18	
K 5:1-11	
L 5:12-22	
M 5:23-28	

**Lesson 23 – Narrow the Scope of Your Study**

As an example we will examine the first two paragraphs of chapter one of 1 Thessalonians.

GREETING AND SALUTATION

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1

V 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

This opening verse answers some of the questions that we should seek to answer. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are involved in the composition of this letter; so we have answered “who” is doing the writing. The recipients of the letter are the church members located in Thessalonica; so we have answered to “whom” the writing was addressed.

Notice that Paul is identifying the church as being located “in” the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This indicates that a close relationship exists between God and Believers.

Paul also has a short prayer for them. He desires that grace and peace will be given to them.

In order to help get us started, notice that three principles are taught in verse 1.

PRINCIPLE #1: Great people of God desire that other people grow in their relationship with Him.

PRINCIPLE #2: Great people of God can work together in encouraging others to grow.

PRINCIPLE #3: Great people of God want to share what they have.

To further narrow the scope of our study, we will now consider the verses that form the second paragraph.

THANKSGIVING FOR THEIR EXAMPLE

1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-10

First, read this second paragraph through several times.

V 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;

V 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

V 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

V 5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

V 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

V 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

V 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

V 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,

V 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Then go through and give a title to each verse.

V2 = \_\_\_\_\_

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;”

V3 = \_\_\_\_\_

“constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,”

V4= \_\_\_\_\_

“knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;”

V5 = \_\_\_\_\_

“for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”

V6 = \_\_\_\_\_

“You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,”

V7= \_\_\_\_\_

“so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.”

V8= \_\_\_\_\_

“For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also

in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.”

V9= \_\_\_\_\_

“For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,”

V10= \_\_\_\_\_

“and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

When finished, your titles of each verse may look something like this.

V 2 = THANKSGIVING IN PRAYER.

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;”

V 3 = WHY THE THANKSGIVING - FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE.

“constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,”

V 4 = LIVING OUT THEIR CALL FROM GOD.

“knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;”

V 5 = THEIR ROOTS IN THE GOSPEL.

“for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”

V 6 = THE DIFFERENCE THE GOSPEL MADE.

“You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,”

V 7 = THE FIRST RESULT OF THE DIFFERENCE – AN EXAMPLE.

“so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.”

V 8 = THE SECOND RESULT OF THE DIFFERENCE -IMPACT.

“For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also

in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.”

V 9 = THE FOUNDATION OF THE DIFFERENCES -TURNING FROM IDOLS.

“For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,”

V10 = THE FOUNDATION OF THE DIFFERENCES -HEAVENLY LIVING.

“and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

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