



# PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

Date: 07.20.25 | Ministry at Thessalonica  
Scripture: Acts 17:1-15; 1 & 2 Thessalonians

## LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

### MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- God values all people and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost with the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and people are invited to join Him in His work.
- We are to be involved in reaching the nations through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- The church is a fellowship of believers, and we are called to meet together regularly.
- The church is not a place or a building, but rather a community of people who belong to the family of God.

### HIGH SCHOOL:

- God values all people---born and unborn, young and old, male and female, all ethnicities, those of opposing faiths---and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and as we join Him in His work, He uses people to accomplish His eternal purposes.
- We demonstrate honor for God when we respect the earthly authorities God has placed in our lives.
- The church is a community of believers called to gather regularly to study Scripture, pray, worship, serve, encourage one another, and proclaim the gospel to the world.
- The church is called to train and equip its members for works of ministry.



### MEMORY VERSE

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. - Romans 1:16a**

16 F l a n a o t g, f i i t p o G f s t e w b, - use this first letter memorization tool that aids in remembering text by using the first letter of each word as a cue.



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## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

### “Believe It or Not?” (Verbal Edition)

Purpose: To introduce the idea that people respond differently to new ideas, and to highlight the importance of testing what we hear, just like the Bereans did.

#### How It Works:

1. Say: “I’m going to read a few statements out loud. Your job is to decide — Do you believe it or not? Don’t worry about being right or wrong — I want to see your first reaction.”
2. Read aloud a few statements, one at a time. Ask students to raise their hands if they believe it’s true, and keep them down if they don’t believe it. Then ask: “Why?” for 1–2 of the statements. (You don’t need to answer them all yet.)

#### Here are some fun/surprising options:

- Bananas grow on trees. (False — they grow on large herbs.)
  - Lightning never strikes the same place twice. (False — it often does.)
  - Goldfish only have a 3-second memory. (False — they remember things for months.)
  - The Bible was originally written in English. (False — Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek.)
  - Jesus rose from the dead. (True — core Christian belief!)
3. Ask a few quick questions:
    - “What made you believe or not believe certain statements?”
    - “How do you know if something is true?”
    - “Have you ever believed something just because someone said it?”

#### Say:

“In Acts 17, Paul and Silas share the truth about Jesus in two different cities — Thessalonica and Berea. In Thessalonica, some people believed, but others got angry. In Berea, people listened carefully, but they also checked the Scriptures to see if Paul was telling the truth. Let’s see how these two groups responded — and what we can learn from the Bereans especially.”



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## BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Paul's second missionary journey began around AD 48–49 and concluded in AD 51. His focus was on proclaiming the gospel and strengthening new believers in the Greek provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. Throughout this journey, we see God's sovereign hand directing Paul's steps, opening hearts, and expanding the church. The message of salvation by grace through faith remained central, and cultural barriers were navigated wisely for the sake of the gospel. Suffering was embraced not as a setback, but as an opportunity to witness to God's power and joy in all circumstances. Despite opposition, the church continued to grow, grounded in sound teaching and strengthened by the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:5).

The journey began with Paul and Silas traveling through Syria and Cilicia to strengthen the churches (Acts 15:36-41). Paul retraced the route of his first journey in reverse order. In Lystra, he met Timothy, a young believer with a strong reputation among the local Christians (Acts 16:1-5), who likely came to faith during Paul's earlier visit to the city (Acts 14:8-23; 2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy would later become one of Paul's closest and most trusted companions (1 Tim. 1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19).

In Philippi (Acts 16:11-40), the Lord opened Lydia's heart to believe (Acts 16:14), and she and her household were baptized. Her home eventually became the meeting place for the new Christian community in Philippi (v. 40). Paul also cast out a spirit from a slave girl (Acts 16:16-24), which led to him and Silas being thrown into prison. There, the jailer and his household came to believe in Christ, were baptized, and rejoiced with newfound faith (Acts 16:31-34; John 3:16; Rom. 1:16; 10:10-11; Matt. 5:12).

From Philippi, Paul traveled approximately 94 miles to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia (Acts 17:1). In Philippians 4:16, Paul mentions that the Philippian church helped him with his material needs during this time. Acts 17:2 notes that Paul preached on "three Sabbath days," suggesting a brief synagogue ministry. However, his two letters to the Thessalonians reflect a longer ministry and deeper relationship with the church there (1 Thess. 2:9; 5:12; also Phil. 4:26).

Paul "reasoned with them from the scriptures" about the necessity of Christ suffering and rising from the dead—an idea the Jews resisted, even though it is found in the Old Testament (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 12:10; 13:7). Some Jews, a great many of the devout God-fearing Greeks, and not a few prominent women were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas.



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However, the Jews who opposed Jesus and His gospel grew jealous, angry that Paul was persuading Jews, Gentiles, and even women to believe. They stirred up a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, where the missionaries were thought to be staying (Acts 17:5-9). Unable to find Paul, they dragged Jason and other new believers before the city officials, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also... they are saying that there is another king (not only Caesar), Jesus.” (17:7). The charges were civil and political rather than religious, as the Jews knew the Romans would respond to civil unrest, not theological disputes. Claiming that anyone rivaled Caesar was a capital offense. Money was taken from Jason as security, likely meaning that Paul would have to leave the city to prevent further disturbance. This may have been the “Satan’s hindrance” Paul referred to in 1 Thessalonians 2:18.

Paul and Silas fled by night to Berea, about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica (Acts 17:10). The Jews in Berea were “more noble” (17:11)—open-minded, fair, and thoughtful. They received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true. Luke commends this activity as a pattern for all believers. He supports the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture—the idea that the Bible can be rightly understood not only by scholars but also by ordinary people who read it eagerly and dependently, with trust in God’s help. Many Bereans believed.

However, when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that Paul was proclaiming the word of God in Berea as well, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds (Acts 17:13). The brothers sent Paul away to the sea. At the same time, Silas and Timothy remained in Berea (17:14-15). Paul then traveled alone to Athens.

Though Luke gives few details about the travels of Silas and Timothy, Paul provides more context in 1 Thessalonians 3, and Luke expands further in Acts 18:1, 5. These passages reveal the following sequence:

1. Paul traveled to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy in Berea (Acts 17:14-15).
2. Paul summoned them to join him in Athens (v. 15).
3. Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Athens (v. 16; 1 Thess. 3:1-2).
4. Paul, concerned for the new churches he had founded in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea), sent Timothy to Thessalonica to check on them amid persecution (1 Thess. 3:1-2). He likely sent Silas to Philippi or Berea (Acts 18:5), being willing to remain in Athens “alone” (1 Thess. 3:1).
5. Paul left Athens and went to Corinth (Acts 18:1).
6. Silas and Timothy reunited with Paul in Corinth, bringing encouraging news from the Macedonian churches (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess. 3:6).



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7. From Corinth, Paul wrote two letters to the church in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), written from Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

Paul's letters were written in response to the information he received from Timothy (1 Thess. 3:6). He had been deeply concerned about the young, fragile church in Thessalonica, especially since he had been forced to leave them abruptly due to persecution. Thankfully, Timothy brought back good news about their faith and faithfulness, though certain issues needed clarification.

These included:

- Confusion about end-time events—some believers were worried that they had missed the rapture (1 Thess. 4:13) or that the tribulation had already begun (1 Thess. 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-12).
- Moral exhortations—some believers were engaging in inappropriate behavior (1 Thess. 4:1-8), while others had become idle (1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15).

Paul wrote both letters to comfort, instruct, and exhort. In them, he emphasizes the hope we have in Christ, reminding the Thessalonians of their brave reception of the gospel despite opposition. He reaffirms the sincerity of his ministry (1 Thess. 2:8, 10), assuring them that his sudden departure was not from lack of care. He urges them to live in light of Christ's second coming—a central theme in both letters.

Indeed, 1 Thessalonians mentions Jesus's return at the end of every chapter, and almost 40 percent of 2 Thessalonians addresses this topic. Paul writes not as a distant theologian but as a compassionate pastor, deeply concerned for the spiritual growth and endurance of his converts. He reminds them that no matter the persecution they face, they have a strong and certain hope that cannot be shaken.

In our day, Christians may either be overly focused on Christ's return or neglect it altogether. Paul's letters to the Thessalonians provide a wise and balanced approach. Jesus is coming again, and we are called to live each day in light of that reality—with hope, holiness, and perseverance.



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## LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY

Remind your group that we are studying the New Testament. The book of Acts is about God sending the Holy Spirit to permanently dwell within Jesus' disciples and other believers after He ascended back to heaven. With the help of the Holy Spirit, those who followed Christ told many people about Jesus, helped others, and started the first churches. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the message of Jesus began to spread all over the world.



### TELL THE STORY - Acts 17:1-15

Paul went on his second trip to tell people about Jesus. This trip lasted about three years. He wanted to help new Christians grow stronger in their faith. God guided Paul, helped people believe, and made the church grow, even during hard times. The Holy Spirit gave the believers strength (Acts 16:5).

Paul traveled with a man named Silas. They first went through Syria and Cilicia to visit and encourage the churches (Acts 15:36-41). In a town called Lystra, Paul met a young man named Timothy. Timothy believed in Jesus and had a good reputation. He joined Paul and later became one of Paul's closest helpers (Acts 16:1-5).

Next, they went to Philippi (Acts 16:11-40). There, a woman named Lydia heard Paul speak. God opened her heart, and she believed in Jesus. She and her family were baptized. Her home became the meeting place for other believers.

Paul also helped a slave girl who had an evil spirit. This made her owners angry, and Paul and Silas were thrown into prison. That night, there was a big earthquake. The jailer was afraid, but Paul told him about Jesus. The jailer and his whole family believed and were baptized (Acts 16:31-34).

Then Paul traveled to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1). He taught about Jesus in the synagogue for three weeks. Some people believed, but others became jealous. They started a riot and attacked the house of a man named Jason. They said Paul was teaching about another king named Jesus (Acts 17:7). To stop the trouble, Jason had to pay money, and Paul had to leave the city. Paul later said this was Satan trying to stop him from returning (1 Thess. 2:18).



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Paul and Silas went to Berea (Acts 17:10). The people there were kind and eager to learn. They read the Bible every day to see if Paul's message was true. Many believed. But some men from Thessalonica came to stir up trouble again, so the believers sent Paul away. He went to Athens, and Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea.

Later, Paul asked Silas and Timothy to join him. Timothy went back to Thessalonica to check on the church. Silas may have gone to another city. Paul waited in Athens, then went to Corinth (Acts 18:1). In Corinth, Silas and Timothy brought good news. The church in Thessalonica was doing well (1 Thess. 3:6).

Paul wrote two letters to the Thessalonian church. Some people were confused about Jesus' return. Others were not living the right way. Paul wrote to help them understand and to encourage them to keep trusting Jesus.

In both letters, Paul reminded them that Jesus will come again. He told them to live in a way that pleases God. Even when life is hard, we have hope in Jesus that cannot be shaken.



## RETELL THE STORY



## SHARE THE GOSPEL

The message of the gospel is simple, yet life-transforming: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." This was the message preached by Paul, Silas, and the early followers of Jesus — a message that still carries power today.

Paul and Silas's missionary journeys were born out of their encounter with the freedom found in Christ. God called them, filled them with His Spirit, and sent them out to proclaim the good news of salvation. That freedom meant so much to them that they were willing to face danger and hardship so that others could hear and believe.

Jesus has given all believers the same mission: "Go and make disciples of all nations." You don't need a seminary degree or a platform — you need a willing heart and the power of the Holy Spirit. God has placed people in your life who need to hear that hope and salvation are



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found in Jesus. You may be the one He uses to bring them the message of eternal life.

- **Pray** for someone you know who doesn't yet believe in Jesus.
- **Prepare** by reading Scripture and letting the Holy Spirit guide your words.
- **Proclaim** the good news with boldness, love, and trust that God will work in their heart.
- **Partner** with other believers to live out the mission in your neighborhood, workplace, or school.

The same Holy Spirit that filled Paul and Silas is with you today. Don't underestimate the impact you can have when you say "yes" to God's call.

Let's be a people who, like Paul, carry the message of freedom — and watch as hearts, lives, and entire communities are changed by the power of the gospel.





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## QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

**Who were the two main people traveling on this journey?**

**What was Paul's mission during his second trip?**

**What message did Paul and Silas keep sharing everywhere they went?**

**Who did Paul meet in Lystra, and why was this person important?**

**What happened when Paul and Silas met Lydia in Philippi?**

**Why were Paul and Silas thrown into prison?**

**What amazing thing happened to the jailer while they were in prison?**

**Why did some people in Thessalonica get angry with Paul?**

**What did the angry crowd do at Jason's house?**

**How were the people in Berea different from those in Thessalonica?**

**What did the Bereans do when they heard Paul's teaching?**



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**Why did Paul write letters to the Thessalonians?**

**What were some things the Thessalonians were confused or worried about?**

**What are some things Paul reminded them to do while waiting for Jesus's return?**

**Why is it important for us today to live like Jesus is coming again?**

**What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?**

**What does the story teach me about myself?**

**Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?**

**Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?**

**How does this story help me live on mission?**



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## PRAYER PROMPTS

*God, we thank You that the gospel is for everyone. Thank You for making the way for anyone to be saved through faith in Jesus. We love You. Amen.*

## REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

16 F l a n a o t g, f i i t p o G f s t e w b, - use this first letter memorization tool that aids in remembering text by using the first letter of each word as a cue.



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## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

**ATTENTIVE** - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

**COMPASSIONATE** - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

**CREATOR** - God made everything. He is uncreated.

**DELIVERER** - God rescues and saves his children.

**ETERNAL** - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

**FAITHFUL** - God always keeps his promises.

**GENEROUS** - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

**GLORIOUS** - God displays His greatness and worth.

**GOOD** - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

**HOLY** - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

**IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING** - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

**INCOMPREHENSIBLE** - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

**INFINITE** - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

**JEALOUS** - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

**JUST** - God is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

**LOVING** - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

**MERCIFUL** - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

**OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY** - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.





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## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.



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## Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?



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## Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD



- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD



- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?