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Faith Bible Church
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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study through the Bible-29 (1 Thessalonians 1-5, the 18 thought units)

The Bible is addressed, *primarily*, though not exclusively, to our understanding. That means the mind. Primarily it is designed to grow the mind in Truth. Sure, there are a lot of applications to the problems of life. However, first and foremost these applications must always be a result of actually understanding the content of the Word of God. We should never study the Word or listen to a Bible class *primarily* for some application for yourself or others. To do so creates all kinds of maladies where the believer *only* looks at the Word of God to solve problems. Such an attitude tends to foster a victim mentality, besides keeping the believer from every really understanding the Bible as such. We all need application, but we need the truth first and foremost. Apart from really growing *in the truth*—rather than mainly looking for emotional fixes—the believer never builds a frame of reference of truth in his soul, which is the goal. With a biblical frame of reference, when an issue or problem comes up, the mind will *first* think of a biblical passage instead of what some teacher said about this or that.

The goal of Scripture is to establish the Christian mind in its truths, rather than patching up or jacking up an “emotional” life that is in chaos—due in some measure to lack of true orientation to truth in the first place. God’s way is to first enlighten the mind with Truth, once you see Truth in the right light, then the right feelings—affections, passions, experiences, virtues—associated with faith, hope, and love will follow. Grasping Truth always leads to true passion for God and the things of God. To see Truth is to enter into spiritual joy. And spiritual joy should never be confused with temporal happiness or joy. They are distinct, very different indeed. Spiritual joy is a supernatural joy and does not depend upon the circumstances of life, whereas temporal or earthly joy is totally dependent upon circumstances of life. The goal of the Scriptures is to create supernatural joy. Note the spiritual joy of the imprisoned Paul in Philippians 4:4. Yes, even he lived under an evil government, which incarcerated him on several occasions, but that could not stop that “caged” bird from singing; read Acts 16:22-25. It is living in the light of Truth that opens one’s eyes to the grand spiritual realities which bring supernatural joy regardless of the circumstances of life—read 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Jeremiah 15:16; Psalm 119:111.

Back to our 1 Thessalonian personal Bible study. In my Greek text there are 18 thought units, paragraphs; see below. For the next few days, I would like for you to read each of these sections and write a one sentence description for each section. This will further force you to grasp more essential truths by yourself, truths that will be the foundation for countless applications and insights. There is a vast difference between some teacher filling out these 18 thought units for you, and you discovering and digging them out yourself. This personal Bible study is designed to get you in the Text. At first it may seem difficult. At first you may not feel motivated. However, if you stick with it, over the months and years, you will increasingly be able to open up the Word of God and pull things out you never thought were possible. Furthermore, when an issue comes up your mind—because of daily exposure to the Word—will

jump to the passage that has the answer instead of *first thinking*, “well, such and such pastor said ____.” When Jesus said “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,” He was talking about believers applying truths from personal, daily study of the Word—even Jesus studied the Word daily (Isa. 50:4). Like anything else, the hardest part is at the beginning. However, if you stick with it, you will grow in capacity to understand the Word of God for yourself, which will lead to an enhanced understanding of God, the spiritual life, and all of reality. However, there is no easy way to gain this skill—it takes practice and that practice must be done the right way. I am here to help in any way that I can. My goal is to help equip you so you can open your Bible daily and see God and many of His wonderful truths for yourself. This does not mean that you do not need exhortations from pastors; it just means that you are not *so* dependent upon them. You can understand God and truth on a very personal level, from personal study. It means that because you are grounded in the truths of the Word of God, you will be able to even get more out of, say, doctrinal tapes. Instead of being at the mercy of others on certain teachings, you are personally grounded in the Word and can evaluate their teachings in light of a personal and *accurate* understanding of the Word of God. Again, here are the 18 thought sections. Write a one sentence description for each section.

1:1

1:2-10

2:1-12

2:13-16

2:17-20

3:1-5

3:6-10

3:11-13

4:1-2

4:3-8

4:9-12

4:13-18

5:1-11

5:12-22

5:23-24

5:25

5:26-27

5:28.

In case you have not answered the 4 questions that I sent in the last lesson, here is another opportunity. It will probably be a little easier after working through the 18 thought sections above, which form your outline of the book.

- 1) What is the general tone or atmosphere of the letter?
- 2) What are Paul's purposes for writing the letter?
- 3) Does Paul have one over-riding theme?
- 4) Which parts or topics interest you the most?

*In 'Ehyeh,
Pastor Don Hargrove*