

Paul Gave Hope

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11

MAIN POINT: Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by reminding them that Jesus will return.

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return?
We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.

2

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 108



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 110



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 116



Leader BIBLE STUDY

Consider how your life would change if you could know the future—if you could accurately predict the weather or outcomes of baseball game. If you could know how your life is going to turn out, would you live today differently? In the bigger picture of God's plan for the world, we do know the future. God reveals the outcome of His plan for humanity in His Word.

In the Book of 1 Thessalonians, Paul writes about the future to encourage believers facing persecution. Their hope as believers then is the same as our hope as believers today. We look forward to a final resurrection, the return of Jesus, and the judgment of the world.

Around AD 50, the city of Thessalonica was filled with those who worshiped idols, Greek and Roman gods, and even the Roman emperor himself. So when Paul started a church there, he quickly faced persecution and was forced to flee the city. Even though he could not return, Paul still loved the young church and was concerned for them, so he sent Timothy to check on the believers.

Timothy reported back with good news—though the church was suffering from persecution, they were holding tightly to their faith. They did have some misunderstandings about Christianity, especially the return of Jesus, but they were working hard for the Lord. Paul wrote a letter to encourage the believers and to clear up misunderstandings about the future and what happens when Christians die.

Perhaps Paul's greatest message was about the return of Jesus. On that day, Paul said, believers will be freed from their sufferings. On the Day of the Lord, Jesus will return for His people and judge the wicked. That's a promise we can still claim today.

Paul's letter gave believers hope. The hope we find in the Bible is stronger than just wanting something to happen; biblical hope is expecting with confidence because we know God is faithful and true.



MINISTRY GRID
training made simple

Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Change your tone:** Use your voice to convey concern when telling about the believers' suffering and excitement when telling about our future hope.
- **Display a map:** Show a Bible times map to help kids see the location of Thessalonica.

Paul Gave Hope

1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11

About 20 years after Jesus died on the cross and rose again, **Paul traveled to the city of Thessalonica.** The people there worshiped idols. Some of them even worshiped the Roman emperor. **Paul told the people the good news about Jesus, and many people believed in Jesus. Paul started the church in Thessalonica, but some people did not like Paul or his teachings and they forced him out of the city.**

Paul worried about the people in Thessalonica. They had not been believers for very long. **So Paul sent his friend Timothy to see how they were doing. Timothy brought back good news. Even though the Thessalonians faced suffering for their faith, they did not give up. Paul wrote a letter to encourage the believers. He told them that Jesus will return someday. On that day, Paul said, believers will be freed from their sufferings! This message gave them great hope.**

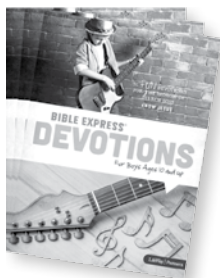
Paul wrote to the believers at the church in Thessalonica to help them know what is true and to teach them what happened to friends who had died. The people could grieve with hope. Because Jesus died and rose again, God would bring with Him those who had died—if they trusted in Jesus.

On the day that Jesus returns, the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a shout. Those believers who have died will be raised to life first. Then believers who are still alive will be raised up together to meet the Lord. We will live with Him forever!

No one knows when Jesus will come again. The Day

of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, when you do not expect it. **So be ready.** God has promised us eternal life; He has saved us through His Son, Jesus. **Whether we are alive or dead when Jesus returns, He will bring us all home with Him forever. So continue to encourage each other because we have this future hope.**

Christ Connection: The prophets in the Old Testament told about the Day of the Lord, a day when God would come to judge the world and save His people. Paul said that in the future, on the Day of the Lord, Jesus will return for His people and judge the wicked. Believers live with hope, knowing that Jesus will come again.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover how God's Word can help them grow in the gospel. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Introduce the STORY

SESSION TITLE: Paul Gave Hope

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11

MAIN POINT: Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by reminding them that Jesus will return.

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return?
We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think about something they are looking forward to in the future, like an upcoming vacation, special event or holiday, or something new they will get to do when they are older. Ask why it is special or exciting to them.

SAY • It's good to have something to look forward to.

Sometimes we can get discouraged by things in our daily lives, but knowing something good is coming gives us hope. Today we are going to learn about Paul's message of ultimate hope through Jesus.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "What Paul Gave" on the activity page. Kids should use the key to color the spaces and discover the hidden word.

SAY • The hope we find in the Bible is stronger than just wanting something to happen; it is expecting with confidence because we know God is faithful and true. We'll see how Paul gave hope to believers.

- "What Paul Gave" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Key words

Form two or more teams of kids to play a fill-in-the-blank game with key words from today's story. On the board or paper, draw out the number of blanks for each letter in the word or phrase. Allow team 1 to guess a letter. If they are correct, they get to guess again. If they are incorrect, team 2 gets a chance. Continue alternating teams.

Teams get 5 points for every correct letter. Teams get 10 points for solving the puzzle. Play as many rounds as you have time. Use words/phrases such as *Paul, Thessalonica, Day of the Lord, return, hope, heaven.*

SAY • Great job at spelling out some of our key words from today's Bible story. Listen to the Bible story to see how all these words come together in an encouraging message of hope for all believers.

OPTION 2: What do you hope to be?

Play a drawing game with the kids. Invite them to take turns drawing what they hope to be when they grow up. Challenge the other kids to identify the drawing. Continue until each kid has a turn or as time allows.

SAY • God has a special and unique plan for your life. It's fun to think about what gifts He has given you and how you can use them now and in the future.

God also has a plan that is the same for all of us, and that's to trust Jesus and be with Him when Jesus returns. We will learn more about that through Paul's letter to the Thessalonians.



- dry erase board or large piece of paper
- marker

- chalkboard or dry erase board
- chalk or marker

Transition to teach the story

Teach the STORY

SESSION TITLE: Paul Gave Hope

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11

MAIN POINT: Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by reminding them that Jesus will return.

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return? We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• name tag
• large binder or clipboard

[Leader enters wearing a name tag and carrying a large binder or clipboard. Leader is visibly excited to see the children.]

LEADER • Hello, recruits! I am so pleased to see you've returned for another day of training. Our scheduled launch is just a few weeks away. Our technical crews have made quite a few improvements on the rocket and launch pad. I've really enjoyed seeing them work together, like we talked about in our last training.

We have so much to go through; I was a little nervous you wouldn't return, but seeing you here gives me great hope that we will accomplish this important mission right on schedule! Speaking of hope, hope is a key element in today's training course. Part of great teamwork relies on having a common goal and hope. The Bible gives us a special hope, and we can have confidence in the future because we know God is faithful and true.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • But first, pop quiz! Does anyone remember our big picture question that we introduced last week? [*Pause for kids to respond.*] Let's say it together: ***How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return?*** Several of you gave me some strange looks when I explained this last time. It doesn't appear to have much to do with our launch training, but it's more connected than you may think. Who remembers the answer?

We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel. Let's say it again so it really sinks into our minds. ***How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return? We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.***

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

LEADER • Looking at our timeline, we can quickly review last week's training. We learned from Paul's letter to Philemon that we need to welcome one another as brothers and sisters in Christ and forgive as Christ forgives us. What an amazing foundation for teamwork!

Today, our training focus is on hope. Hope is more than just wanting something to happen; hope is confidence in the future because we know God is faithful and true. Let's look at God's Word and see what He wants us to learn about hope.

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you

• Bibles
• "Paul Gave Hope" video
• Big Picture Question
Poster
• Bible Story Picture
Poster

tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Paul Gave Hope.”

LEADER • Many of the new believers in Thessalonica and other churches were discouraged and confused. When they heard the good news of the gospel from Paul, they thought Jesus would return very soon. So when several years had gone by and some of their fellow believers had already died, they thought they misunderstood Paul. Why had Jesus not returned like He said, and what about their friends who had already died? It looked like they were losing hope.

In his letter, **Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by reminding them that Jesus will return.** Jesus would not forget them. And when He returns, Paul said that believers who have died will be raised to life first. Then believers who are still alive will be raised up together to meet the Lord. We will live with Him forever! That was just the hope and encouragement the people of Thessalonica needed.

Paul also reminded them that no one knows when Jesus will come again. He said the Day of the Lord will be like a thief in the night, meaning no one will be expecting it. So we need to be ready at all times.

How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return? We remember God’s truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.

When we put our hope in Jesus, we have something amazing to look forward to! We get to spend eternity with Him! This should encourage us, even when things seem hard. We are reminded that one day, all the suffering will go away.

Because of our hope in Jesus, we should also want

to share that hope with everyone we know and love. Our hope in Jesus gives us a common goal and focus: to share Him with as many people as we can so they can be with Him forever like us!

Christ connection

LEADER • For centuries, God's people had heard about the Day of the Lord. It was often a warning to point people back to God instead of worshiping idols. The prophets in the Old Testament told about the Day of the Lord, a day when God would come to judge the world and save His people. Paul said that in the future, on the Day of the Lord, Jesus will return for His people and judge the wicked. Believers live with hope, knowing that Jesus will come again.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Instruct kids to read the key passage in a hopeless, discouraged tone. Then instruct them to read it again, this time with an attitude of hope and celebration.

- Key Passage Poster
- "Inspired by God" song

LEADER • When we have the hope of Jesus in our hearts, His joy flows through us, even in how we speak and act. We can be such a reflection of His love that other people notice it in us. Then we can explain that we have this hope because we believe God's Word is true for us.

Lead boys and girls in singing "Inspired by God."

- “Unit 35, Session 2” discussion starter video

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by reminding them that Jesus will return. Hope can help us get through hard times. Watch this.

Show the “Unit 35, Session 2” discussion starter video.

Then lead kids to discuss the following questions:

- What helped Maria when she wanted to give up in the race?
- How did Paul encourage the Thessalonian believers?
- How can we encourage one another in the faith?

LEADER • God calls us to encourage one another with words of hope as we wait for Jesus’ return.

Sing (4 minutes)

- “Hope of Heaven” song

LEADER • Let’s show Jesus our joy for Him by praising Him with a song. Stand and sing with me.

Sing together “Hope of Heaven.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for using Paul to encourage the Thessalonians so many years ago, and thank You that those words still encourage us today. Because we know You will return as You promised, we have hope for our future. Help us to share that hope with everyone we meet. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Apply the STORY

SESSION TITLE: Paul Gave Hope

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11

MAIN POINT: Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by reminding them that Jesus will return.

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return?
We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards or half-sheets of paper
- pencils

Distribute a pencil and paper to each child. Instruct them to write out the key passage, leaving blanks for five or six words. Each child can choose which words to leave blank.

When everyone is finished, instruct kids to pass their paper two times to the right. Encourage kids to fill in the blanks without looking at the poster. Then kids should pass their papers two times to the right again. Guide the kids to check the answers with the key passage poster.

SAY • This is a wonderful key passage that gives us hope for trusting in God's Word. There may be days when you will be tempted to doubt if everything in the Bible is true. Verses like these remind us that everything in Scripture is inspired by God. Let's read it aloud together one more time. [*Lead kids in reading.*]

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- "The Gospel for Kids" printable

Distribute copies of "The Gospel for Kids" printable.

SAY • Paul's message of hope for the Thessalonians was a big encouragement for them. But what about people who hadn't trusted in Jesus yet? This was not a hopeful message for them. Paul's message would have

scared them, as it should have. **Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by reminding them that Jesus will return.** Understanding the gospel—the good news about Jesus and what He has done—is so important. We can share the gospel with others and give them hope and encouragement. What people believe about God matters forever!

Walk through each section of the gospel as a class. Be sure to ask questions throughout the explanation to help boys and girls stay focused. Allow them to ask questions about things they may not understand.

- **God rules.** Who is in charge at home? Who is in charge of everything?
- **We sinned.** Have you ever done something wrong?
- **God provided.** Can we pay the price for our own sin?
- **Jesus gives.** What is the best gift you've ever received?
- **We respond.** Have you trusted in Jesus as Lord and Savior?

Then instruct each kid to find a partner. Challenge them to practice with their partner explaining the different parts of the gospel. Remind kids that it's not just the job of the church leaders and teachers to share the gospel; all believers are called to share the hope of Jesus with our friends, our family members, and the world.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Cards of encouragement

SAY • Paul truly cared about the people of Thessalonica. He took time to write them a letter to encourage them when they were going through a hard time.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- construction paper or card stock, various colors
- markers or crayons
- stickers or other decorative items

Don't you think that meant a lot to the people when they received his letter? We can do the same for our friends and family. We're going to create cards of encouragement to brighten someone's day and remind him or her that true hope is found in Jesus. Help boys and girls think of people they can create a card for. Consider making cards for families who have not been to church in awhile, kids who are out sick, church staff members who have been working hard, someone who recently had a death in the family, and so on.

Challenge the kids to do their best in creating their cards, as these cards can make a big difference in someone's day. Suggest that kids pray for the person receiving the card and deliver their cards with a parent this week. The next time you see kids, ask them when they delivered their cards.

OPTION 2: Songs of hope

Create teams of two or three kids and guide teams to work together to write a song of hope. It can be a song, poem, rap, or another creative demonstration. The purpose is to take thoughts from today's session and put them together to encourage someone else. Songs do not have to be long.

Suggest kids use a familiar tune ("Row, Row, Row Your Boat" or "Happy Birthday") and change the words.

Invite teams to present their songs to the rest of the class. Be sure to keep the time fun and light-hearted so kids do not feel pressured to have perfect songs.

SAY • Music and poems are great ways to remember important ideas. I know I remember things better when they are put to music. I hope these songs you created will help you remember to put your hope in Jesus and be ready for His return.

- paper
- pens or pencils

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- 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 to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for His Word. Pray that boys and girls would grow to treasure Jesus and find their hope in Him.

As time allows, lead kids to complete the "Big Picture Word Search" on the activity page.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Big Picture Word Search" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.