

Paul Gave Hope

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

MAIN POINT: Paul encouraged believers in hard times.

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 3:16

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do we live while waiting for Jesus to come back? We follow Jesus and tell everyone about Him.

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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.



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The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

• Teach the sign for

Jesus: Before starting to tell the Bible story, teach children the sign for Jesus. Gently touch the top of the middle finger to the center of the opposite palm, then repeat on the other hand. Every time you say Jesus in the story, children should silently make the sign.

• Make it interactive:

Walk among the children during the opening, passing out Bibles as you say that many Thessalonians believed and Paul started the church. Return to the front as you explain Paul leaving the city. Send another leader among the preschoolers to be Timothy. He will encourage the children to hold the Bibles high over their heads during the rest of the story and say “don’t give up.”

Paul Gave Hope

1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11

Paul had traveled to the city of Thessalonica. The people there worshiped idols, things that were not God. Some of them even worshiped the leader of Rome. Paul told the people about Jesus, and many of them believed. **Paul started the church in Thessalonica, but not everyone liked Paul or his teaching about Jesus. They made him leave the city.**

Paul worried about the believers in Thessalonica. They had not been believers for very long. **So Paul sent his friend Timothy to visit them. Timothy brought back happy news. Even though following Jesus was not easy, the believers did not give up.**

Paul wrote a letter to encourage the believers. He told them that Jesus will come back someday. On that day, believers will not suffer any more. This message gave the believers hope.

Paul wrote, “To the church in Thessalonica. We want you to know what is true. We believe that Jesus died and rose again.” Paul said that believers who die before Jesus comes back will not miss out. When Christians die, Jesus takes them to be with Him. When Jesus comes back, He will bring with Him the Christians who died and we will live with Him forever.

Paul wrote, “No one knows when Jesus will come again, so we should always be ready.”

Christ Connection: The prophets in the Old Testament told about the day when God would judge the world and save His people. Paul said that in the future, Jesus will come back for His people and judge the wicked. Believers can live with hope because Jesus will come again.



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GOD'S WORD?
GET
MORE!**

Invite preschoolers 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

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Welcome time

- “I Have Hope” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- “Find the Good” activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Invite preschoolers to look at the picture. Draw a circle around the people who are doing good. Draw an *X* over the people who are making a wrong choice.

SAY • *How do we live while waiting for Jesus to come back? We follow Jesus and tell everyone about Him.* Which of these people look like they are following Jesus? Which people don’t look like they are ready for Jesus to come back?

High hopes

Instruct children to squat down, then jump up high when you say something they hope for. Ask everyone to squat again, then invite one child to share a hope of his. Children should continue jumping up if they agree with the hope, and taking turns telling each other their hopes. Be prepared



to offer suggestions such as tacos for dinner, get to go to the playground, get a new bike, my brother is nice to me, get to spend the night with grandparents.

SAY • Hope is the feeling of wanting something to happen and thinking that it could happen. The hope we have in God is powerful because we know God can do anything. Some people don't have much hope because their life is so hard, they don't think that good things can happen. No matter how hard life is, believers can always have hope! We'll learn more in our story today!

Work a challenging puzzle

Set out a large floor puzzles for preschoolers to work together to assemble.

• floor puzzle

SAY • Good job working together! This puzzle was not easy to put together, but you did not give up. Following Jesus was not easy for the believers in Thessalonica but they did not give up. We will hear how Paul encouraged these believers in today's Bible story.

Transition to tell the story

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to bible study by calling each one by name and saying, "[*Child's name*] can have hope!"

• countdown video
(optional)

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Introduce the Bible story

- photo of a believer who has passed away

Show a picture of a believer who has passed away. Talk about how you miss them but have hope in Christ.

SAY • *[Person's name]* died *[how long ago they passed away]*, and I really miss him *[her]*. But today's Bible story gives me hope that I will see *[person]* again when Jesus comes back!

Watch or tell the Bible story

- Bible
- bookmark
- "Paul Gave Hope" video (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Place a bookmark at 1 Thessalonians 4 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • What book is this? The Bible! Whose words are in the Bible? God's! Is the whole Bible true? Yes! Today's story is from the first letter that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

Talk about the Bible story

- Main Point Poster
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

SAY • Not everyone in Thessalonica liked Paul's teaching about Jesus. They made life really hard for the believers there. **Paul encouraged believers in hard**

times. Paul said that in the future, Jesus will come back for His people. Believers can live with hope because Jesus will come again.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or big story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. Who wrote the letter in today's story? (*Paul*)
2. To whom did he write? (*the Thessalonian believers*)
3. Who is coming back to judge the world? (*Jesus*)
4. When Jesus comes back, will believers suffer any more? (*no*)
5. Does anyone know when Jesus will come again? (*Only God the Father knows.*)

Learn the big picture question

SAY • The Thessalonians didn't know what happened to believers when they died. **Paul encouraged believers in hard times.** He told them that Jesus will come back. He will bring with Him the Christians who died and we will live with Him forever. I bet their next question was, ***How do we live while waiting for Jesus to come back? We follow Jesus and tell everyone about Him.***

• Big Picture Question Poster

Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to 2 Timothy 3:16. Read the key passage aloud several times. Sing together the key passage song, "All Scripture."

SAY • Our key passage explains that God inspired Paul to write this letter to the Thessalonians. Believers can live with hope because Jesus will come again.

• Key Passage Poster
• "All Scripture" song

Transition to experience the story

Experience THE STORY

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Pass the message

Sit in a circle with the preschoolers. Whisper a phrase into a child's ear, encourage him to whisper what he heard to the next child, and so on around the circle. The last child should announce what she heard. Tell the class what the original phrase was. Repeat as desired. Review the key passage.

SAY • Did you know that God spoke to lots of different people who helped write the Bible over thousands of years? And they all wrote the same message! We had a hard enough time keeping the same message around our circle today.

The prophets in the Old Testament told about the day when God would judge the world and save His people. And in the New Testament, **Paul encouraged believers in hard times** by reminding them that Jesus will come back for His people and judge the wicked. We know the Bible is true because only God could keep the same message going for so long through so many people!

- construction paper
- markers or crayons
- stickers

Make encouraging cards

Identify members of your church who are unable to

attend due to health issues. Invite preschoolers to make encouraging cards to mail to these church members. Preschoolers may draw a picture or say a message for an adult to transcribe. Encourage preschoolers to decorate the cards with stickers.

SAY • Paul encouraged believers in hard times. The people we are sending our cards to are in hard times too. Let's pray for them to be encouraged by these cards. As believers we can encourage each other to live with hope because Jesus will come again.

Sound the trumpet

Encourage preschoolers to free play, but explain that you will quietly ask some of the them to lay down and wait for you to blow a horn. Then those who are laying down should jump up and run to you, bringing along everyone else. Celebrate with hugs and shouts when the whole class joins you. Play again as desired, choosing different children to "fall asleep" or even sound the trumpet.

SAY • You never knew when you would hear the horn, but you were ready to jump up and run over with your friends! Paul wrote, "No one knows when Jesus will come again, so we should always be ready." He also wrote that when Jesus comes back, He will come down from heaven with the sound of a trumpet. He will bring with Him the Christians who died. They will be alive and we will live with Jesus forever. ***How do we live while waiting for Jesus to come back? We follow Jesus and tell everyone about Him.***

- horn
- sanitizing wipes (to clean horn between uses)

- “Faces” printables, 1 per child
- dry erase markers
- tissues or dry erasers

Wipe away every tear

Before the session, print and laminate the “Faces” printable for each child. Briefly review the Bible story using the bolded text. Provide dry erase markers for children to draw tears and sad expressions on their pages. As you explain Jesus’ return, help children wipe away their sad drawings and add happy expressions.

SAY • Following Jesus was not easy for the Thessalonians.

Paul encouraged believers in hard times. Paul said that in the future, Jesus will come back for His people and judge the wicked. The Bible says that on that day, God will wipe away every tear and believers will not suffer anymore!

Make predictions

- classroom items

Use classroom supplies to make and test various predictions, such as “I predict I can stack 20 blocks before they fall” or “I predict I can toss a paper wad in a bucket” or “I predict that I can fit 10 markers in one hand.” Encourage preschoolers to vote on whether your prediction will come true before testing.

SAY • To *predict* means to guess how something will happen in the future. We can’t always know what will happen in the future, though we can sometimes guess. Sometimes our predictions are wrong, but God always knows what will happen. He does not guess about anything.

Paul encouraged believers in hard times. God told Paul that in the future, Jesus will come back for His people and judge the wicked. We don’t know when, but we know God’s Word is true!

Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Serve horn-shaped corn chips for snack. Talk about how the Bible says when Jesus comes back, He will come down from heaven with the sound of a trumpet. **Paul encouraged believers in hard times** by explaining that believers can live with hope because Jesus will come again.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

Transition

When a child finishes her snack, guide her to throw away any trash. She may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a picture of a loved one that has died. Remind preschoolers that when Jesus comes back, He will bring with Him the Christians who died and we will live with Him forever. This truth gives us hope, and it is how **Paul encouraged believers in hard times**. Pray for the children.

SAY • Jesus, thank You for promising to come back for us.

Sometimes we get really sad when someone we love dies. But You promised that when You come back, we will all live with You together forever. Help us trust You as we wait, and please come back soon!

Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- books
- puzzles
- play dough
- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers