




Thessalonians

Overview— Chapters 1-5

The main theme in Thessalonians is Jesus' second coming. When He returns, the dead who have believed in Christ will rise and will join the living to meet the Lord in the air (4:15-17).

Unbelievers will experience God's wrath, while believers will inherit salvation. (1:10; 5:2-4, 9-10).

In preparation for that great day, Christians are called to be holy and blameless (3:11-4:8; 5:23). God, who is faithful, will produce in them the holiness He requires (5:24).



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1 Thessalonians

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About the Author:

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth near the end of his second missionary journey. Paul and his companions had established the church in Thessalonica, but were forced to leave by opponents of the gospel. Later, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the church there, and Timothy's report led Paul to write this letter.

c. A.D. 33/34

Conversion of Paul

c. A.D. 49–51

Paul writes
1 Thessalonians

c. A.D. 64–67

Paul martyred
in Rome

Paul has received a report from Timothy about the Thessalonian church. Paul writes to them to restore their hope, which has been tested by unexpected deaths in the church. He reassures them that both the dead and the living believers will be safe at the second coming (4:13-5:11).

In addition, Paul wants to stress the authenticity of himself, Silas, and Timothy as preachers of the gospel (1:5; 2:1-12; 2:17-3:10); to teach them that persecution is normal for Christians (3:3-4); and to challenge them to take responsibility for earning their own living (4:9-12.)

About Thessalonica:

Thessalonica was the proud capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and had a population of over 100,000. Its natural harbor and placement on the busy east-west Egnatian Way, as well as key north-south trade routes, meant that it was a flourishing center of trade and philosophy.

It was a free city and was governed by local officials called "politarchs" (cf. Acts 17:6, 8). Religiously, the city was committed to the Greco-Roman pantheon and the imperial cult; Egyptian cults were also prominent. There was a sizable population of Jews in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5).

Paul's Missionary Journeys:



Prayer:

Through this study of Paul's letter to Thessalonica, it is our prayer that God will stir in you a greater devotion to Him and that you will live a resolved life committed to following His Word while expectantly looking toward Jesus' return.

Examples to All

1 Thessalonians Chapter 1:1-10

Study #1

Key themes from 1:1-10

- Faith, hope and love are essential traits of a believer (1:2)
- Those who respond to the Gospel have been elected and called by God (1:4)
- Joy in suffering is a mark of the believer (1:6)
- Believers will be delivered in Christ's return (1:10)

Silas (or Silvanus)

Was a Judean Christian (Acts 15:22) who joined Paul after he separated from Barnabas.

Timothy

Was from Galatia and the son of a Jewish mother and Greek father. He joined Paul when he passed through his hometown early on in his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-4).

Chapter 1:1-2

While Timothy and Silas are included as co-senders, Paul is the main author as noted in 2:18 and 3:5. It is typical for Paul to include a word of thanksgiving and encouragement in the beginning of his letter.

- ✓ What encouragement do you think the church in Thessalonica found in hearing from Paul and in reading the first few words in his letter?
- ✓ What bearing do the words “grace” and “peace” have in the believer's life? How do these words relate specifically to their redemption in Christ?
- ✓ Why are faith, hope, and love essential traits of a believer? Compare 1 Corinthians 13:13, what does it mean to abide in these things?



grace peace faith hope love

Chapter 1:3-8

As a believer takes a stand in their faith, they should expect to encounter difficulties as a result (1:6). Here, Paul reminds the early church that they have received a powerful gospel and are chosen by God.

- ✓ How is being chosen by God a comfort to those in Thessalonica? How is this a comfort for the believer today?
- ✓ What does it look like for a person to receive the Gospel with power and conviction? What does Paul credit to the believers in Thessalonica?
- ✓ Notice that the early church received the Word with affliction; what encouragement does Paul give them? What encouragement from the Word would you give a friend who is struggling?

Chapter 1:9-10

The early church would face many struggles establishing their faith; yet their strength would come from their relationship with God.

- ✓ What do these verses tell us about these early believers' relationship with God?
- ✓ Why are the adjectives "living" and "true" emphasized by Paul? What adjectives would you use to describe your relationship with God?
- ✓ These early believers looked forward with great anticipation of Jesus' return. Where does this longing come from?

Evaluate and Discuss

- ✓ What does it look like today for the believer to live with power and conviction? What would it look like to boldly live out the Word of God?
- ✓ Who in your life sees you as an example of the Christian faith and how it should be lived? How is your influence impacting their life?
- ✓ Through this study, is there something God is convicting you about? How would you like to see your relationship with God improve?

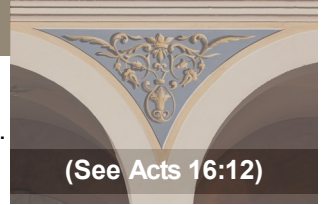
Work of the Ministry

1 Thessalonians Chapter 2:1-12

Study #2

Fact:

Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, with a population of more than 100,000. It was a center of education as well as commerce.



Chapter 2:1-6

Despite the persecution Paul faced in Philippi, he did not stop proclaiming the gospel in Thessalonica, even though it led to further suffering.

- ✓ What did Paul suffer in Philippi? See Acts 16:19-24.
- ✓ Why does suffering produce in the believer's life? What encouragement do we have from 1 Peter 1:6-7? How did the testimony of Paul and Silas become even more effective after their suffering?
- ✓ Paul clarifies his methods for preaching the gospel in vs 3-4. What does Paul share, that affirms his authority in his team's missionary efforts?
- ✓ As a group, come up with a list of the things we learn about how to share the gospel from Paul's example.

Chapter 2:7-12

Paul was a spiritual parent to the believers in Thessalonica and his love was shown through his personal sacrifice and commitment to them. Paul, Silas and Timothy worked tirelessly to shepherd and personally care for the church.

- ✓ Paul compares his ministry to that of a gentle nursing mother (vs 7). How does this comparison help us understand his personal ministry better?
- ✓ Paul also uses the role of a father as an example of his ministry (to exhort, encourage and charge). What could it have looked like to see these words in action as Paul disciplined the early church?
- ✓ What were some of the personal sacrifices that Paul had to make in order to minister in Thessalonica?



VERSE STUDY

“Rather... we are to grow up in every way into Him.” Ephesians 4:14-15

Every believer begins as a spiritual child and over time matures into being a disciple of others.

- How does a believer grow in their maturity?
- What does a commitment to personal growth look like?
- How does a personal ministry relate to "growing up in every way?"

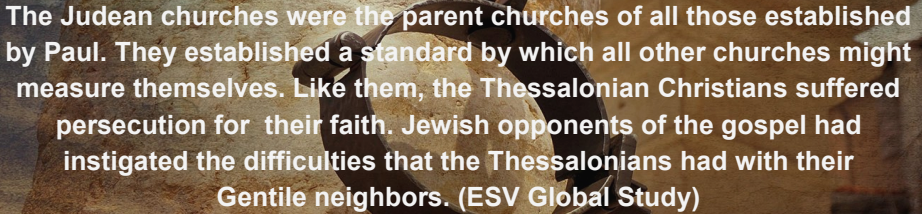
Evaluate and Discuss

- ✓ Who has God put into your life to build you up -to exhort, encourage, and charge? What can you do to be more purposeful with this relationship?
- ✓ Who has God put into your life for you to personally disciple? What can you do to further develop this relationship?

Marks of Maturity (Power of the Word)

1 Thessalonians Chapter 2:13-20

Study #3



The Judean churches were the parent churches of all those established by Paul. They established a standard by which all other churches might measure themselves. Like them, the Thessalonian Christians suffered persecution for their faith. Jewish opponents of the gospel had instigated the difficulties that the Thessalonians had with their Gentile neighbors. (ESV Global Study)

Chapter 2:13

Paul reiterates his gratitude and praise to God in how the Church in Thessalonica handled the Word of God.

- ✓ This is the second "shout out" that Paul gives the early church. How did they specifically receive the Word of God (1:6 & 2:13)? How does this compare with the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:6-7)?
- ✓ Is it possible to value the Word of God, but unwarily handle it poorly? How does the believer properly handle the Word of God?
- ✓ What does it look like for the Word of God to be "at work in you believers"? How do we distinguish between crafty messages on Christian living and messages from God and His Word?

Chapter 2:14-16

Everyone needs to hear the gospel of salvation and at times it will be heard most clearly through the Christian who suffers greatly.

- ✓ Paul in vs 1:7 reminds the Church in Thessalonica that they are an example to all believers in Macedonia (the capital of Rome). Who was their example of the Christian faith (2:14)?
- ✓ Why was the persecution specifically difficult for those who lived in Thessalonica (vs 14)?
- ✓ What does our response to suffering reveal to those who are watching?

Chapter 2:17-20

For a short time Paul's missionary team had to leave Thessalonica because of persecution. This decision was not made lightly as they desired to be with the early church.

- ✓ There is an invisible war around us. Paul, in his letter to Ephesus, reminds the church that our battle is against an evil darkness and spiritual forces. What is the believer's response to spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:13)?
- ✓ What is Paul's hope and joy in Jesus' second coming? How do we keep people as the focus of our lives and ministry efforts as Paul did?



Evaluate and Discuss

"The Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the Word of God, which is at work in you believers."

- 1 Thessalonians 2:13

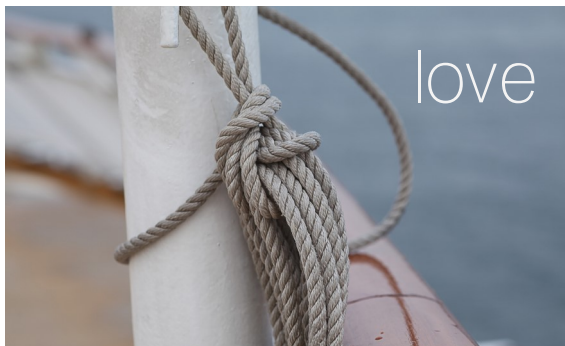
- ✓ What does it look like when God's Word is "at work" in the believer's life? Where do you notice His Word at work in your life?
- ✓ Is there a particular hardship that you are currently facing? How could this encourage an unbeliever if you were to share it with them?

Marks of Maturity-Part 2 (Power of Suffering)

1 Thessalonians Chapter 3:1-13

Study #4

Paul's ministry team had been separated from the Thessalonians for a long period of time. In sending Timothy, which was a sacrifice for Paul, it showed a deep pastoral love he had for the church.



Chapter 3:1-4

Timothy was there to strengthen the persecuted Thessalonians... "we are destined for this". Christians should expect to suffer for their faith (see Romans 8:17-18 and 2 Tim. 3:12).

- ✓ Persecution and trials can be an expected part of the believer's life (vs 3-4). As a believer goes through a trial, what takes place in their heart? What attitude should a believer have toward suffering?
- ✓ How can the believer's response to suffering, be a witness to the lost?

Chapter 3:5

Satan tempted Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11) and he tempts Christians (James 4:7). If Satan had succeeded in getting the Thessalonians to abandon their faith, Paul's mission work would have been a failure... "our labor would be in vain."

- ✓ What hope do you, as a believer, have when it comes to temptation -check out 1 Corinthians 10:13.
- ✓ Read 1 John 1:9 & James 5:16. As a believer, what steps do you take toward restoring your relationship with God when you've given into temptation?

Chapter 3:6-13

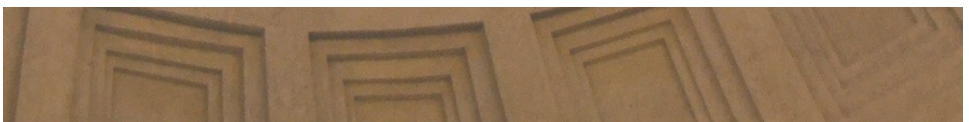
The missionaries had been unable to complete their usual instruction in the fundamentals of the faith. It seems like the church in Thessalonica had mastered the fundamentals of our faith.

- ✓ What would you consider the fundamentals of your faith?
Is God still working to establish any of them in your life (vs 13)?
- ✓ What does it look like for believers to “abound in love for one another”?



Evaluate and Discuss

- ✓ As a young Christian, what/who helped you the most to grow spiritually?
- ✓ Paul were to write a letter to SCC, what do you imagine he would say?
How would he exhort and encourage us?



Staying Pure

1 Thessalonians Chapter 4:1-12

Study #5

Paul now offers instruction and exhortation, giving specific direction on pleasing God (4:1-12) and the second coming of Jesus (4:13-5:11).



Chapter 4:1-8

From the very beginning, Paul and the others had given clear moral instruction on the life that was expected from those who chose to follow Christ.

Living in a way that pleases God is the purpose of the believer's life

- ✓ For the follower of Jesus, what is the purpose of his or her life and how do they fulfill that purpose?
- ✓ What is sanctification? Why does Paul say that sanctification is God's will for us and not something like "evangelism" or good works?
- ✓ Paul gives specific instruction on sexual immorality and self control. Why was this a needed reminder for the early church? What about for us today?
- ✓ How does knowing God's character, give us strength to "walk in all His ways"? What role does the Holy Spirit have in helping you live out your convictions (John 16:8-13)?

"Grace is an attribute of God which governs His attitude to man, and it can be defined as undeserved love and favor of God (Romans 11:6).

Grace permits us to come (nay, demands that we come) as empty sinners, empty of right feelings, good character and satisfactory record, with nothing to commend ourselves but our deep need, fully and frankly acknowledged."

- Roy & Revel Hession

Chapter 4:9-12

Paul's concern for the church is to know and follow God's ways, for them to continue to grow in their faith and to go and be a witness to outsiders.

- ✓ What does it look like for a person to be taught by God (vs 9)? How does God speak to the believer today? What steps can we take to know God better?
- ✓ Personal spiritual growth was a value of Paul's. We see this in his challenge to "do so more and more" (vs 1 & 10). What does he specifically charge the church to do in verses 10-12? How can the church continue to grow in this?
- ✓ How does a believer's life lived in holiness and love, inspire the lost soul?

Evaluate and Discuss

- ✓ What can you do in your relationship with God to know Him better?
- ✓ Is the Holy Spirit convicting you to change something in the way you live?
- ✓ Who has God put in your path that needs to hear the gospel? In what ways are you praying for them and seeking opportunities to share God's truth?

Rapture of the Church

1 Thessalonians Chapter 4:13-18

Study #6

When Christ returns, He will fix everything that is broken and hurting (8:16-39; see Rev. 21:1-22:5). He will restore creation, including every corner of the globe, to its original beauty and wholeness. God will bring dead believers back to life and make all His children perfect like Christ (Rom. 8:29; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Paul answers the Thessalonians' questions about Christians who die before Jesus returns... "we do not want you to be uninformed." The Thessalonians are unaware of the things Paul will explain in vs. 14-17.

Chapter 4:13

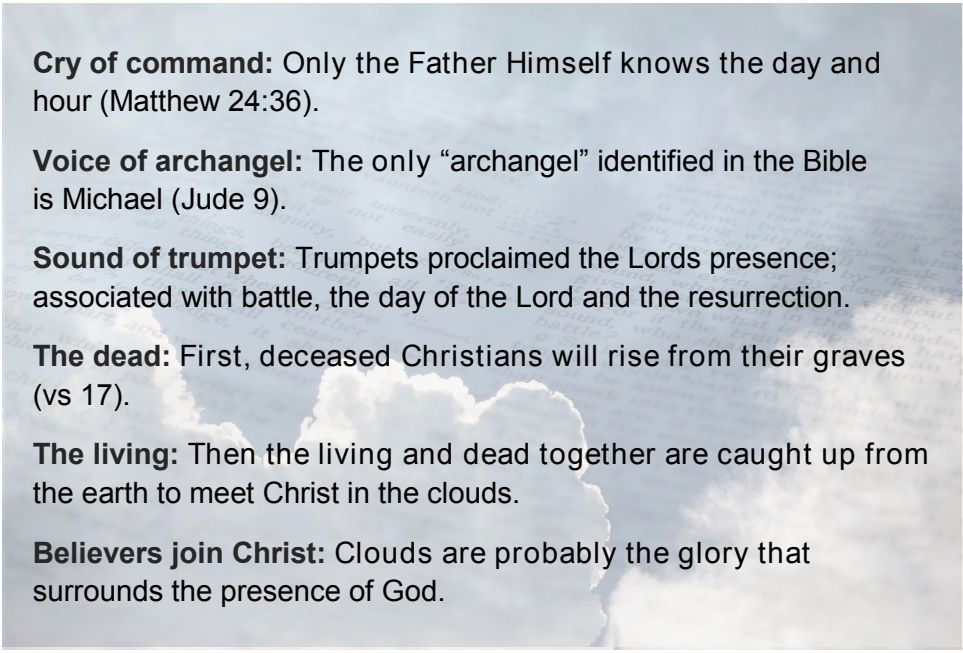
Grieving is not wrong (see Acts 8:2), but it is wrong for Christians to exhibit hopelessness in their grief.

- ✓ Why does the Christian have hope in a time of grief? How is this different than the unbeliever?
- ✓ How would you comfort a friend who lost someone who was not a follower of Christ?
- ✓ As believers, how can our response to death and loss be a witness to the gospel?

Chapter 4:14-17

Christ's resurrection is the center of God's plan for humanity. It is the believer's basis for hope in the future resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15:42-57). Jesus will "bring" deceased Christians with Him at His return "those who have fallen asleep"- the souls of those who have been in heaven with Christ up to that point.

- ✓ "We who are alive" (vs 15); All Christians should prepare for Christ to return during their lifetime. Discuss what it would look like if Christ returned during your lifetime.
- ✓ Do you look forward to Christ's return with anticipation? Do you have any hesitations or fears concerning His return?
- ✓ What do we know from verses 16-17 will occur when Jesus descends from Heaven?



Cry of command: Only the Father Himself knows the day and hour (Matthew 24:36).

Voice of archangel: The only “archangel” identified in the Bible is Michael (Jude 9).

Sound of trumpet: Trumpets proclaimed the Lord's presence; associated with battle, the day of the Lord and the resurrection.

The dead: First, deceased Christians will rise from their graves (vs 17).

The living: Then the living and dead together are caught up from the earth to meet Christ in the clouds.

Believers join Christ: Clouds are probably the glory that surrounds the presence of God.

Chapter 4:18

Understanding about the Lord's return should bring comfort & encouragement, not fear and division.

- ✓ Read Matthew 24:37-44. How can we do as Paul said, and encourage one another to anticipate the Lord's return?

Evaluate and Discuss

- ✓ What is the danger in not being prepared for the day of the Lord?
What is the danger in building your life around earthly things?
- ✓ Would you like for Christ to return in your lifetime? Why or why not?

The Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians Chapter 5:1-11

Study #7

The phrase “day of the Lord” is common in the OT Prophets. It refers to the great and terrible day when Yahweh will punish the disobedient and save the faithful. In Paul’s letters, it is connected with the second coming, “like a thief in the night,” unexpected and unwelcomed by those not ready for it. (See Matthew 24:43–44) (ESV Global Study).

Chapter 5:2-4

The Romans promised peace and security to the citizens of their empire. They promoted this message on coins and statues. But Paul warns that, regardless of how secure people may feel, God’s day of judgment will come for those who have rejected Him.

- ✓ What does the analogy of Jesus coming “like a thief in the night” mean?
- ✓ What is the danger in not preparing for the day of the Lord? What is the danger in building your life around earthly peace and security?
- ✓ Paul uses another metaphor of a woman in labor pains. What does this add to our understanding of the Lord’s return?

Chapter 5:5-8

“Children of light” are those who belong to God and receive His salvation. Check out John 12:26.

- ✓ How is the imagery of light and darkness used in these verses?
- ✓ What does sleep represent? What might a Christian do to ensure he/she is “awake”?
- ✓ What does it mean to “belong to the day” (vs 8)?
- ✓ A Roman soldier would have been instantly recognized by his breastplate and helmet. What traits should make a follower of Christ instantly recognizable?

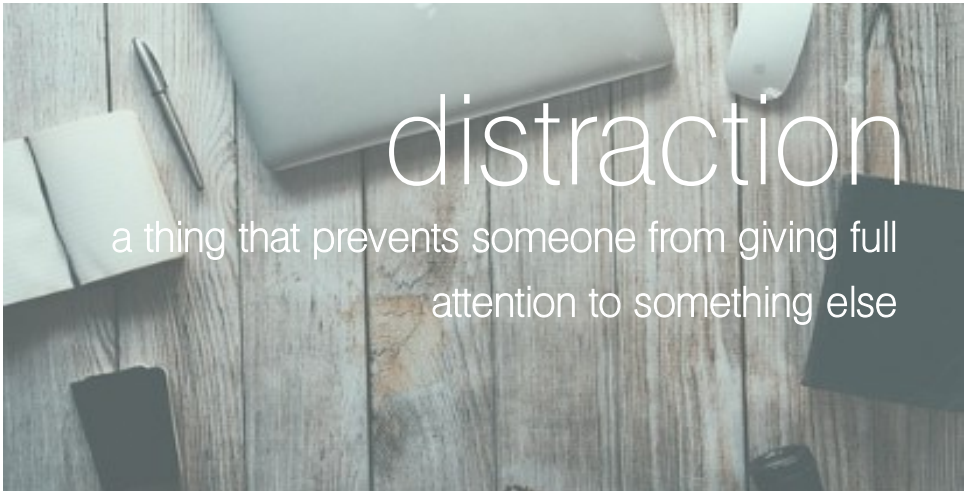


“God doesn't seek for golden vessels, and does not ask for silver ones, but He must have clean ones.”

– DL Moody

Chapter 5:9-11

- ✓ What are some practical ways we can encourage each other to live for Christ as we wait for His return?
- ✓ Are there things distracting you from living ready for Jesus' return?



Evaluate and Discuss

- ✓ Who are the people in your life seeking peace and security? How can you pray for them and reach out to them?
- ✓ Accountability is one way that Christians “keep awake” in godly character. Have you ever considered forming accountability with other believers? What might that look like?

Final Instructions

1 Thessalonians Chapter 5:12-28

Study #8

Paul now turns to some practical matters of church life. He first addresses the relationship between the church body and its leadership, and then closes his letter out reiterating the importance of Christian living.

Chapter 5:12-15

“Respect those who labor and admonish you”. The young Thessalonian church was more than likely not appreciating and respecting its leaders enough. “Be at peace among yourselves,” may suggest there were tensions in the community.

- ✓ Why is it important to let those who minister to us know we value them? What are some ways we can support and affirm our leaders?
- ✓ What different types of people in the church does Paul draw attention to in these verses? What is our responsibility with each group?
- ✓ What has the encouragement of others meant to you personally? Share a time when you were encouraged/helped by another believer.

Chapter 5:16-24

"The next few verses clarify how the Thessalonians were to live in fellowship with God and be careful not to quench the Holy Spirit's fire. "Pray without ceasing" (vs. 17) suggests continual personal fellowship with God.

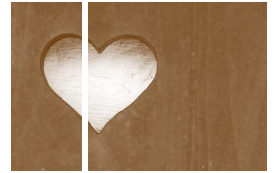
- ✓ What are the ways Paul suggests, for the believer to have fellowship with God?
- ✓ How does practicing these things alone, impact the way we practice them with others? How do they help us encourage and build each other up?
- ✓ Paul uses a fire to illustrate the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How do we tend to “quench” the Holy Spirit?

"Some people think God does not like to be troubled with our constant coming and asking. The way to trouble God is not to come at all." -DL Moody

Chapter 5:25-28

These verses are Paul's final words for the church in Thessalonica. He is reinitiating the importance of fellowship and how it is part of worship. They needed the reminder that when they were together, they were to seek one another out and greet each other with affection.

- ✓ Why was it important for the early church to read Paul's letter as a group of believers? How often do you think they read it?
- ✓ What do you think can be obstacles to a deeper sense of authentic community at church?



Evaluate and Discuss

- ✓ Do you find it easier or more difficult to help others who are in need? Explain.
- ✓ What are examples of genuine love you have observed in our group or church? How can diligent service through love, affect a community of believers?



Prayer Requests /Notes

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Tips for studying 1 Thessalonians

READ

Read the chapter/verses a couple days before hearing the message

LISTEN

Be sure to catch our weekly teaching (live, online or SCC app)

APPLY

Discuss and grow your faith with a group of other believers

Getting Into a Life Group

wearescc.org/life-groups

1. Consider attending a Group Link event for more info
2. Check out the Life Group finder online
3. Complete an inquiry form on Sunday or online

Need more help? Email Pastor John at jdoty@wearescc.org



Snohomish Community Church

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