

## HOW CHURCH WORKS

### "HOW TO HEAR"

#### 1 THESSALONIANS 2:10-16

### This Week's Core Competency

**Authority of the Bible** – I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Telling the truth and preaching the Word—there is a difference. Men may be from Mars, and women may be from Venus, but even if that's true, it's not the Word of God. And while the preacher who delivers a sermon based largely on the message of the 1990s best seller by John Gray may be telling the truth about human relationships, he is not preaching the Word. And even if his message is helpful to couples in his church, the authority behind his words is Gray's, *not* God's. Practical help is no substitute for divine authority.

In his first epistle, Paul commends the Thessalonians for accepting the message he preached to them "not as a human message, but as it truly is, God's message" (2:13 NET). The apostle was confident that the message he preached was *God's word* because, as the book of Acts tells us, it was based on *the Scriptures*. Acts 17:1-9 tells the story of what happened when Paul and Silas came

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*"Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me,  
Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;  
Give me to eat and live with thee above,  
Teach me to love thy truth, for thou art love."*

— Mary A. Lathbury

to Thessalonica. Keep in mind that the crucifixion was an obvious stumbling block to belief in Jesus for Jews, who expected their messiah would rule over Israel, not be put to death by Gentiles (1Co 1:23). Luke writes, "As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scripture, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. 'This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,' he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women."

Paul preached the same message regarding Christ that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Peter told the Jews, Jesus "was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge, and you with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Ac 2:23-25). Why was it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus? According to Peter, it was because Jesus was the Christ. The Scriptures implied as much! Psalm 16 says, "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay" (v. 27). Peter reasoned that David had to be referring to the Christ, and not himself, since "David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day" (v. 29). Since God raised Jesus to life, a fact attested to by many witnesses, Jesus must be the Christ.

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The point is simple enough. To the extent a message is based on the Scriptures—nothing more than, nothing less than, and nothing other than—it is God's Word and "has the right to command my belief and action." To the extent it deviates from that standard, it is man's word, perhaps true, perhaps helpful, but man's word, nonetheless, and hardly a word powerful enough to work spiritual transformation in us.

## For Discussion

Has ready access to email, smart phones, and social media resulted in the dumbing-down and devaluing of communication in general? When letters were written by hand, dropped in a mailbox, and received infrequently, getting a letter in the mail said, "contains valuable message." Now that emails, posts, and tweets are typed, sent with the click of a button, and received in a steady stream, getting any of them more likely says, "contains junk message." It seems to me that all messages, even biblical ones, are treated more like "junk" than they ever used to be. What do you think?

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### 1 Thessalonians 2:10-16

10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.

11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

14 For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, 15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last. (NIV(c)1984)

### Cf., another translation

10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 11 For you know how, like a father with his children, 12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received 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. 14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last! (ESV)

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Underline "holy," "righteous," and "blameless" in v. 10.
- \* Box "as" indicating *comparison* in v. 11.
- \* Double underline "encouraging," "comforting," and "urging" in v. 12.
- \* Circle "worthy" in v. 12.
- \* Bracket "kingdom and glory" in v. 12.
- \* Circle "received" and "accepted" in v. 13.

- \* Bracket "word of God" (2x) in v. 13.
- \* Box "as" (2x) indicating *comparison* in v. 13.
- \* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 13.
- \* Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 14.
- \* Bracket "in Christ Jesus" in v. 14.
- \* Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 16.
- \* Circle "wrath of God" in v. 16.

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day **2**

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Paul uses "holy," "righteous," and "blameless" to describe his and Silas' conduct among the Thessalonians. Paraphrase his description of their conduct.
2. Contrast the *significance* of the simile "like a mother" (v. 7) and the simile "as a father" (v. 11).
3. Paul uses "encouraging," "comforting," and "urging" to describe his and Silas' dealings with the Thessalonians. Paraphrase his description of their dealings.
4. Describe the kind of life you think is "worthy of God."
5. God calls believers "into his kingdom and glory." Explain.
6. Explain the relationship of "the word of God" (v. 13) to the Scriptures.
7. Evidently the word of God was at work in his readers (v. 14). How so?
8. "The Jews"—what was their problem? Explain.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about how the word of God is at work in your life.

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## day 3

### EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

1 Thessalonians isn't the first book in the New Testament canon but it was one of the first ones written. The book of James was probably written first, around A.D. 45. Paul's letter to the Galatians was written afterward, around 49, from Antioch. 1 and 2 Thessalonians then followed around 51, written from Corinth. Because Paul's opening thanksgivings in 1 Thessalonians (1:2-10; 2:13-17; 3:7-10) recount his initial visit to the city, reading Acts 17:1-9 will prove helpful by providing the historical context for the apostle's remarks.

In a nutshell, Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica after being released from jail in Philippi (16:35-40). As usual, Paul went to the synagogue to convince the Jews there that Jesus was the Christ. To do that he argued from the Scriptures that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, which would explain how Jesus could be the messiah even though he was crucified. Many Jews and God-fearing Greeks believed. God-fearing Greeks were non-Jews who believed in the God of Abraham but were not proselytes to Judaism—they had not been circumcised. Sadly, jealous Jews rounded up some hooligans and started a riot. When the crowd migrated to Jason's home looking for Paul and Silas and did not find the missionaries there, members dragged Jason, and some other brothers caught up in the commotion, in front of the authorities on the trumped up charge that they were defying Caesar's decrees by claiming Jesus was king. Paul and Silas apparently avoided the melee, but that night, after spending a number of weeks in Thessalonica (cf., v. 2), the believers sent them on their way to Berea.

1 Thessalonians 2:10-16 is divided into two paragraphs. The first one (vv. 10-12) continues Paul's description of the apostles' ministry in Thessalonica, which began in verse 1. In it he claims he and Silas did all the right things while they were in the city; even in the face of fierce opposition, their conduct as ministers was exemplary. Attempts to parse the distinct meanings of "holy, righteous and blameless" are of limited help. Apparently Paul piled up these adjectives to stress their cumulative effect as near synonyms rather than to contrast their precise lexical differences. Then to substantiate his claim,

he employs a figure of speech called *simile* that uses *comparison* to make a point. He and Silas dealt with the Thessalonians "as a father deals with his own children," he says. As their spiritual fathers, they encouraged, comforted and urged them to live exemplary Christian lives. Again, Paul seems to be going for the cumulative effect of three different near synonyms. Although with regard to the nuance of the second term, one author writes, "Clearly the verb is well adapted to the thought of consolation. We shall not be far wrong in assuming that here it is used with special reference to those who found it difficult to live the Christian way in the face of the opposition they encountered. To them the apostles spoke words of cheer and inspiration" (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 84). In a nutshell, the apostles did everything humanly possible to get them to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. After all, they were destined to participate in the messianic kingdom of God.

The second paragraph (vv. 13-16) contains an additional reason why the apostles continually thanked God for their readers (vv. 13, 14; cf., 1:3) immediately followed by a measured outburst against their Jewish opponents (vv. 15, 16). Talking about the message the apostles preached and the Thessalonians heard, Paul calls it, "the word of God." He calls his message *that* not because he had the written Scriptures in mind but because the message he preached was a message *from* the Scriptures. According to Acts 17:2, 3, when the apostle went to the synagogue to convert the Jews, he "reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead." They continually thanked God for the Thessalonians because the Thessalonians received this message as God's word and welcomed it wholeheartedly.

And the proof of the pudding was in the tasting, so to speak. The word of God went to work in the lives of the Thessalonians, so much so, that they were willing to suffer persecution rather than renounce their faith in Jesus. Just like the Judean Christians who had willingly suffered at the hands of the Jews, they willingly suffered at the hands of their own countrymen. As far as the Jews were concerned, their rejection of the messiah was the

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last straw. Jesus himself warned them, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you

desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Mt 23:37, 38). The eschatological wrath of God had come upon them at last; all that remained was their ultimate experience of it.

## *The Message of the Passage*

*A message from the Scriptures is the Word of God to be taken for what it actually is, a message from God rather than men.*

### day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

### **“How to Hear”**

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

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# notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 10 **holy, righteous, blameless** Cf., "pure," "right," "without fault" (GNT); "devout," "honest," "faultless" (NLT). Paul "strings" three terms elsewhere in his letter (1:3; 2:3; 2:12). Since the meanings of these overlap considerably, their "total meaning" is likely what Paul wants to convey (Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians*, 33). "Their inner convictions led to devout (**holy**, *hosios*) conduct. With reference to God's objective standard their behavior was **righteous**, measuring up to what God expects and requires. The conduct was unrepachable (**blameless**, *amemptos*; cf. 5:23), able to stand their critics' scrutiny because it was right" (Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*: 695).

v. 12 **encouraging, comforting, urging** "The training provided included strong positive appeals (encouraging, *parakalountes*), soothing encouragement (comforting, *paramythoumenoi*), designed to cheer up and to inspire correct behavior, and solemn, earnest entreaty (urging, *martyromenoi*)" (695). "All three verbs imply continuous action in Greek, but this force is brought out in TEV only in connection with the third verb: kept urging. It would be stylistically clumsy to say 'kept encouraging, kept comforting, and kept urging'" (Ellingsworth, 34).

v. 12 **worthy** "Paul does not mean that his readers should behave so well as to become worthy of God's love or his gifts. It is rather that their behavior should be such as is appropriate in the relationship to God in which they now live" (34).

v. 12 **kingdom and glory** The two terms can be taken together; cf., "God who has called you to share the splendour of his kingdom" (Phillips). There are four arguments in favor of translating this way, one of which pertains to Hebrew style. "In Hebrew one may express with two nouns a single idea which includes them both, and Paul's style often shows the influence of Hebrew" (35, 36). Hebraism or not, the reference is the same. Paul is referring to the saints' participation in the future messianic kingdom of God (Mt 24:30; cf., 25:34). "Ultimate realization of the messianic kingdom with its future glory is in view here (cf. Acts 17:7)" (Robert L. Thomas, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:255).

v. 13 **also thank** Lit., "And for this reason also we give thanks to God unceasingly" (cf., ESV; GNT). Most translations take "this reason" to refer forward to the second reason for thanksgiving in a series of three (cf., 1:2-5; 2:13; 3:9-13). "Not only were the fruits of righteousness manifest in the Thessalonian converts' lives (1:3), but also the way they received the preached Word of God warmed the apostles' hearts" (Constable, 695).

v. 13 **received, accepted** "To hear the word does not imply any response, positive or negative: [received] and [accepted] make it clear that the response was active and positive . . . between [them] there is considerable overlap of meaning, but in [accepted] the implied setting is that of a host welcoming a guest, rather than that of a pupil receiving wisdom from a teacher" (Ellingsworth, 38, 39). "The prayer of thanks not only referred to an objective reception (*paralabontes*, '[having] received'), but also a subjective acceptance (*edexasthe*, 'you accepted'). The latter, a wholehearted welcome, indicated their high estimate of God's word" (Thomas, 256).

v. 13a **word of God** "This was the word they had heard preached by the missionaries (*akoes par' hemon*, 'you heard from us'), but ultimately it was the word from God (*tou Theou*)" (257; cf., Ac 17:2, 3). "Paul was accustomed to having his message dismissed by his enemies as man-made, something devised by himself; hence his solemn protest in Gal 1:11, 12 . . . He therefore found it especially encouraging when it was sincerely and spontaneously welcomed as good news from God" (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol.45, 1 & 2 *Thessalonians*, 45).

v. 13 **actually is** Cf., "truly is" (HCSB); "really is" (NRSV); "indeed it is" (GNT).

v. 13b **word of God** In contrast with "word of man" implies this is a subjective genitive meaning "'preceding [*sic*, proceeding] from God, having God as its author,' as its emphatic position requires (Lightfoot; Notes)" (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 592).

v. 14 **the Jews** See an extended treatment of Jewish opposition (Thomas, 258).

v. 16 **has come** The "coming wrath" Paul mentions in 1:10 refers to eschatological wrath that occurs in connection with the day of the Lord (5:1-11). "If the wrath is yet future, why does Paul speak of it as happening in the past (*ephthasen*, 'has come')? The best explanation of the aorist tense of the verb comes from comparing the only other NT combinations of *phano epi* ('come upon')—Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20—where Jesus speaks of the kingdom's arrival in comparable terminology. The unique force of this verb connotes 'arrival upon the threshold of fulfillment and accessible experience, not the entrance into that experience' (K. W. Clark, "Realized Eschatology," *JBL* [Sept 1940], 59:379). Just as the kingdom reached the covenant people at Christ's first coming without their enjoying 'the experience ensuing upon the initial contact' (*ibid.*, p. 379), so the wrath that will precede that kingdom has come before the Jews' full experience of it. All the prerequisites for unleashing this future torrent have been met" (Thomas, 260; Constable, "Notes on 1 Thessalonians," [www.sonlight.com](http://www.sonlight.com)).

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## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

I often hear new parents say they wish the beautiful babies they bring home from the hospital had an instruction manual to go with them. It would certainly make it easier in those early months of sleep-deprived parenting. However, thanks be to God that He has provided us with an instruction manual for life! God's Word is powerful and life changing! Our core competency this week is Authority of the Bible. This week I have found myself wondering how often I go to it to receive instruction and guidance in life's everyday decisions. More than that, how often am I directing my kids to God's Word? Are they seeing their dad and me consistently reading and obeying the Bible? I hope so. I want them to know that they can trust God's truth above everything else they see in popular culture. It is unshakable - a firm foundation for them to build their lives upon.

This week in your Family Time, hide a Bible somewhere in your house. Design a scavenger hunt with clues left in lots of places. Tell them the treasure at the end is life changing and powerful. When your kids find the hidden Bible take a few minutes to talk to them about how your family builds itself around the truths found in God's Word and then keep a Bible on the kitchen table all week as a visual reminder of the commitment you've made to live under God's authority.

### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: 1Th 2: 6-13; Ac 2: 1-41

1. In 1Th 2:13, how did the people receive the word of God?
2. In Ac 2, who stood up and spoke God's word to the people?
3. According to Ac 2:41, what did God do after Peter spoke?

### What Do You Think

1. Many people were saved on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Ac 2:36 says they were "cut to the heart." What does that mean?
2. Imagine being there on the day God sent the Holy Spirit (Ac 2:1-12). What would you be thinking?
3. According to 1 Thessalonians 2:8, why did Paul share the gospel?

### What R U Going To Do

It's the GREAT FAMILY BIBLE CHALLENGE!! Set a goal with your family this week regarding God's Word. EX: Memorize a verse together. Read at night together. Each family member commits to 5 minutes in the Bible daily. Have fun with it and reward yourselves at the end of the week!

## MEMORY TIME

### Core Comp

Authority of the Bible – I believe the Bible is God's book that tells me what to believe and do.

### Memory Verse

Acts 2:43 "Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles."

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC \_\_\_\_ and Verse \_\_\_\_ . Family completed **Say** \_\_\_\_ **Think** \_\_\_\_ **Do** \_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).