

Faith Bible Study Guide
For the Week of October 18, 2026
21st Sunday in Pentecost
“Chosen: Give Thanks Always”



Be still [2 Minutes]: As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

CENTERING WORDS/ WORDS TO PONDER:

Affirmation and instruction belong together.

Paul begins his letter by thanking God for the Thessalonians' faith, love, and hope. He does not begin with a list of everything they are doing wrong. He recognizes God's work among them, even as the rest of the letter will encourage them to keep growing.

As we study this week, consider this: What difference does it make when someone first reminds us that we are loved before challenging us to change?

OPENING PRAYER:

Gracious God, open our hearts and minds to your Word. Help us hear the encouragement you offer, receive the instruction we need, and recognize your Spirit at work in us and among us. Teach us to be a community that builds one another up in love while continuing to grow in faith. Amen.

Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]

1. Take a moment. Breathe in deeply... and breathe out slowly. Allow yourself to simply be present. How is it with your soul today?
2. When have you received encouragement that helped you grow?
3. Have you ever received criticism that was difficult to hear but ultimately helped you? What made the difference?
4. Which is easier for you: affirming others or offering honest correction? Why?

Be the Word: Scripture Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

What word, phrase, or image catches your attention?

Greeting

¹From Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

To the Thessalonians' church that is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace to all of you.

Thanksgiving to God

²We always thank God for all of you when we mention you constantly in our prayers. ³This is because we remember your work that comes from faith,^[a] your effort that comes from love, and your perseverance that comes from hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father. ⁴Brothers and sisters, you are loved by God, and we know that he has chosen you. ⁵We know this because our good news didn't come to you just in speech but also with power and the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know as well as we do what kind of people we were when we were with you, which was for your sake. ⁶You became imitators of us and of the Lord when you accepted the message that came from the Holy Spirit with joy in spite of great suffering. ⁷As a result you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸The message about the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place. The news about your faithfulness to God has spread so that we don't even need to mention it. ⁹People tell us about what sort of welcome we had from you and how you turned to God from idols. As a result, you are serving^[b] the living and true God, ¹⁰and you are waiting for his Son from heaven. His Son is Jesus, who is the one he raised from the dead and who is the one who will rescue us from the coming wrath.

L: The Word of God for ALL People.

P: Thanks be to God.

What word, phrase, or image stayed with you?

Be rooted: [Bible Study]

Theme: God's affirmation calls us into faithful living.

Big Idea: We are chosen not because we are perfect or better than others, but because we are loved and called to become witnesses to God's love.

Exegetical Reflections & Commentary

Why Did Paul Write This Letter?

Thessalonica was an important city in the Roman Empire. Paul and his companions helped establish a Christian community there, but opposition forced them to leave sooner than they wanted. Paul remained deeply concerned about this young church and later received encouraging news about its faithfulness.

First Thessalonians is generally considered the earliest surviving letter written by Paul, dating to around 50–51 CE.

Paul was writing to a community facing real challenges. Throughout the letter, he addresses:

- **Persecution and social pressure:** Following Jesus could bring conflict with the surrounding community.
- **Questions about Paul himself:** He reassures the believers that his ministry was sincere and motivated by love, not personal gain.
- **Christian conduct:** He encourages holiness, sexual integrity, mutual love, and responsible living.
- **Grief and hope:** He addresses questions about believers who have died and the return of Christ.
- **Community life:** He encourages mutual care, support for leaders, and faithfulness in everyday life.

Our passage, 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10, comes before most of those instructions. Notice that Paul does not address all these issues in the opening passage. Paul begins with gratitude and

affirmation. Instead, he begins by giving thanks and recognizing the good work already happening among them. Affirmation establishes the relationship from which instruction can be offered.

He reminds them of the faith already at work among them before addressing the places where they still need to grow. That makes this a helpful passage for asking: How do we affirm one another without pretending we are perfect—and how do we challenge one another without forgetting that we are beloved?

Digging into the Word

A. Paul begins with gratitude — verses 2–3

Paul remembers the Thessalonians in prayer and gives thanks for their “work of faith,” “labor of love,” and “steadfastness of hope.”

These are not merely feelings or beliefs. Faith, love, and hope are visible in how the community lives.

- **Faith** moves us to trust God and live in response.
- **Love** calls for effort, sacrifice, and care for others.
- **Hope** gives us perseverance when circumstances are difficult.

Discussion Questions

1. What positive affirmation does Paul offer this church?
2. Why might Paul begin with gratitude instead of immediately addressing the church’s problems?
3. If someone looked at our congregation, where might they see our faith, love, and hope in action?

B. “Chosen” does not mean “better” — verses 4–5

Paul calls the Thessalonians beloved by God and speaks of them as chosen. In Scripture, being chosen often means being called into a relationship with God and entrusted with a purpose. It is not simply a reward for being good, nor a declaration that one group matters more than another.

Paul connects their calling with the gospel arriving not merely in words, but “in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.” The message became real in the lives of those who heard it.

Discussion Questions

1. When have you felt chosen for something? What about a time you were overlooked or excluded?
2. How can being chosen shape our identity in healthy ways? How can it become harmful if we believe it makes us superior to others?
3. What does it look like when the gospel moves beyond words and becomes visible in our actions?

Facilitator Note: *Being chosen is both a gift and a calling. God’s love is not something we earn; it is the foundation from which we respond. The question is not simply, “Am I chosen?” but also, “How will I live because I am loved?”*

C. Imitation and example — verses 6–8

Paul says the Thessalonians became imitators of him and his companions, and then became examples to other believers. This might sound uncomfortable to us. We know that Christian

leaders are imperfect, and none of us wants to pretend we have everything figured out.

But Paul is not asking the church to imitate a flawless personality. He points toward a way of life shaped by the gospel, even amid suffering. The Thessalonians then become an example themselves—not because they are perfect, but because their faith is visible and encouraging to others.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel about Paul inviting people to imitate him? What makes following a leader's example helpful—or risky?
2. Who has modeled faithful living for you? What did you learn from that person?
3. What kind of example do we set for people who are watching our church from the outside?

D. A faith that changes our allegiance — verses 9–10

Paul recalls how the Thessalonians turned from idols to serve the living and true God and to await Jesus.

For many of these new believers, turning away from idols was not simply changing a private religious belief. In their Roman city, religious practices were intertwined with family life, civic customs, and social relationships. Their new faith could create real tension and cost.

For us, the question is not simply which ancient idols we have left behind. It is worth asking what competes for our deepest loyalty today: status, wealth, comfort, political power, the need for approval, or the desire to be right.

Discussion Questions

1. What might it have cost the Thessalonians to live differently from their surrounding culture?
2. What competing loyalties can pull us away from the way of Jesus today?
3. How can our faith shape our choices in public life, our relationships, and the way we treat our neighbors?

6. Bringing It Home: What Do Our Neighbors See?

The United Methodist Discipleship Ministries preaching notes for this passage invite us to consider whether our neighbors see the joys of discipleship in us—and whether they would expect to be welcomed if they came to church.

A church can have beautiful worship, faithful traditions, and meaningful ministries, yet still leave people wondering whether they belong. Paul's picture of the Thessalonian church challenges us to consider whether our faith is visible in ways that invite others into God's love.

Discuss together:

1. What resonates with you about the idea that people may learn what Christianity is by watching us?
2. What challenges you about that responsibility?
3. If someone unfamiliar with Faith UMC watched our congregation for a month, what might they learn about Jesus?
4. Who might still wonder whether they would be welcomed here? What could we do to make belonging more visible?

Be transformed: [Faith in Action Challenge]

Read the passage one more time. Choose a word or phrase that stands out to you.

Complete this sentence:

“Because I am loved and called by God, this week I will...”

It might be an act of encouragement, a welcoming gesture, a step toward reconciliation, a way to serve a neighbor, or the courage to speak up for someone being overlooked.

Share your commitment with the group if you feel comfortable.

Going Deeper on Your Own

Choose one of the other readings for this week: Exodus 33:12–23; Psalm 99; Isaiah 45:1–7; Psalm 96:1–9, 10–13; or Matthew 22:15–22.

1. **Pray:** “Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things out of your law” (Psalm 119:18).
2. **Read** your chosen passage aloud.
3. **Notice:** What word, image, or idea stands out?
4. **Question:** What puzzles you or invites further reflection?
5. **Reflect:** What might God be saying to you through this text?

Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:



*We lift up prayers for all of God's
Creation. Lord Hear our Prayers.*

continued prayers for Healing and Wholeness

Rev. Alan Mark	Rev. Gary Williams	Kiki Hashimoto
Alice Kaiya	Geri Shiraki	Kim Foster & V'hraniku
Alvena & Tom Fukuhara	Glenn & Millie	Haynes
Amy Higa	Shimizu	Rev. Kim Montenegro
Amy Holmes	Gordon Mark	Kelsey DeGracia
Anthony Anderson, Sr.	Grace Tochiara	Kenny Medeiros
Apolosi Lokotui	Grant Hanada	Kyle Ichikawa
Arlene & Ernie Santiago	Harriet Tateyama	Kyra Seki
Austin Maeda	Harry Manaka,	Layne Nakasone
Barbara & Mary Tamura	Sansei Rocker	Linda Jung
Betty Kobata	Harry & Ruth Takaki	Liz Harner
Bill Morris	Herb Aoyama	Lucas Yniguez
Brian Okumura	Ingrid Peterson	Marion Antoku
Cami Bruns	Irene Munesto	Maddie Sakurai-Lopez
Christine Keim	Jacqueline Wong	Mae Nakakihara
Claretta & Kim Foster	Jan Tanabe	Mary Jung
Cory Williams	Jayne Watanabe	Mary & Bob Keily
Dan Segawa	Jehiel Vinluan	(siblings)
Dan Yamashita	Jennie Shitakubo	Mary Marchand
Deron Takishi	Joanne Sato	Maxine Butcher
Debbie Uyeshima Dillard	Joelle Peelgreen	Rev. Mike Hiranuma
Diane & Destiny	Jordan Sasaki	Mutsuko Nishi
Ueda-Banda	Joyce Matsubara	Nancy Matsushima
Dr. DoAnn Tsuneo	Joye Barker	Ngina Tukutau
Kaneko	Julie Inouye	Noah Miyagawa-Sue
Elaine Yoshida	Juliet Koyanagi	Oscar Phillip Bland Jr.
Eleanor Nagai	Kaitlyn Sabedra	Pam Fink
Ellen Hokama	Karlynn Fernandez	Paul Mito
Emi Holmes	Kay Saxton	Patty Kobayashi
Florence Nakakura	Hian Tehrani	

celebrations and milestones

Rev. Eric Iki and Crystal Orleans-Iki on the birth of their third daughter, Cassie Yuna Iki (September 14, 2026).

Jessica (Tondo) and Derek Quan, on the birth of their daughter, Remi Rio Quan (August 25, 2026).

for All Our Saints

The Noguchi family, on the passing of Iris Noguchi (98 years old).

The Tsuda family, on the passing of Jane Tsuda (October 4, 2026). A Celebration of Life for Jane will be held on November 14, 3pm at Faith UMC.

The Honda family, on the passing of Jack Honda (September 29, 2026).

The Matthew and Matt Cheung, on the passing of Matthew's mother, Yip Cheung (September 2026).

Ryo & Yuki Miyasaka, on the passing of their mother, Hozue Miyasaka (September 17, 2026).

Barbara, Brian, Kevin and the Takumi Family, on the passing of Lawrence Takumi (September 15, 2026).

those in Community Living & Homecare

Audrey Goto

Emma Horiuchi

Faith Tanaka

Fred Oshiro

Rev. Harry Fujimoto

Irene & Tak Ryano

Jane Kiyohara

Jennie Shitakubo

Marion Antoku

Mary Jung

Nobie Shiokari

Ruth Hirata

Sets Asano

Sue Hasegawa

for our Worldwide Community

**for the Leadership
of our Country and
our Churches**

**for the immigrants:
migrants, refugees,
asylees**

**for our siblings in
Christ who struggle
and in need of
God's care**

**for those who live in
through wars,
unrest, and violence**

**for those suffering
and rebuilding after
national disasters
and man-made
catastrophes**

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Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:

October Birthdays & Milestones:

- Doris Shigihara (93)
- HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CHAD!!!
- Birthdays, Anniversaries...
 - Ron, Dave, Susan...
-

Prayers for the Community:

- Terry Matsumoto
- Ellen Hokama
- Kim Foster, Claretta Foster, V'hraniku Haynes
- Ky Seki & Joyce Matsubara
- Alvena Fukuhara at Kei-Ai
- Sue Hamada at home recuperating
- Herb Aoyama is recovering at home
- Barbara Takumi
- Winnie Osaki
- Ken Ito (successful knee surgery)
- Doris Shigihara
- Arlene & Ernie Santiago
- Norma Ishigo
- Bone Family* - Pam Fink (Christine's Mom), Liz Harner (Alan's Mom)
- Louise Sakamoto*
- Diane & Destiny Ueda-Banda

Traveling Mercies

Donna & Darrell Iki (Japan)
Julie & Alan Inouye (Japan)
Wade Inouye (Japan)
Tanis & Fujimoris (Japan)
Kathy & Kirk Miya (Hawaii)
Joanne & Dave Sato (Texas)
Eva Nishi (Hawaii - November)

And Know that He is God: Closing Prayer & Blessing

Loving God, thank you for choosing us, loving us, and calling us into your work. When we feel unqualified, remind us that your grace comes before our accomplishments. When we need to grow, give us the humility to listen and the courage to change. Make us a community that encourages one another, welcomes our neighbors, and lives our faith in visible acts of love. May our gratitude become service, and may our lives create ripples of your grace far beyond what we can see. In Christ's name, Amen.

- Victoria DelaTorre
- Dan Yamashita
- Julie Inouye
- Leroy (Kim's cousin)

Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord.

- Iris Noguchi (98yo; passed 2 weeks ago)

- Jane Tsuda (10-4-26); service November 14 at 3pm
- Jack Honda (9-29-26); Private Family Service
- Larry Takumi (9-15-26)
- June Hirai passed away (Keith Watari) - Jane Shimatsu's sister
- Harold Hiroshima - Harriet Tateyama's brother-in-law
- Hozue Miyasaka (9-17-26)

Prayers for the World:

- Hurricanes/Flooding, Earthquakes, Fires
- Wars and Harm-Violence-Suffering... around the world
- Elections this Fall
- Leadership