

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

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

**TEACH
THE STORY**
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**EXPERIENCE
THE STORY**
(25–30 MINUTES)
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**REVIEW
THE STORY**
(10+ MINUTES)
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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.



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

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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*, children should make the sign.
- **Make it interactive:** Walk among the children during the opening, passing out Bibles as you say that many Thessalonians believed. Return to the front as you explain Paul's 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.

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.

Teach THE STORY

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

Welcome and worship with song

- “Children of the Kingdom” song
- “I Have Hope” song

Greet preschoolers with a smile. As preschoolers arrive, sing an action song such as “Children of the Kingdom” to engage them and help them feel welcomed. Begin worship by leading preschoolers in “I Have Hope.”

Watch or tell the Bible story

- Bible
- “Paul Gave Hope” video (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Main Point Poster
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Instruct children to show you their saddest face and then their happiest face.

SAY • In today’s story, some believers were having many sad things happen. Their faces might have looked just like your sad faces. Paul wrote to them with really good news so that they would have hope. Let’s listen to our story to hear the good news.

Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 4. Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

Practice the key passage and a Bible skill

- Bible
- Key Passage Poster
- Bible marker or ribbon
- “All Scripture” song

Place a Bible marker or ribbon at 2 Timothy 3:16. Invite a few volunteers to come up one at a time and open your Bible to the key passage.

SAY • Second Timothy 3:16 says all Scripture is inspired by

God. God's Word helps us understand what is true about God and the hope we have in Jesus.

Sing the key passage song "All Scripture" together.

Learn the big picture question and answer

SAY • Paul told the Thessalonians the good news that Jesus will come back one day. We are still waiting for Jesus to come back, but He has important work for us to do here while we wait. That's what our big picture question is all about. *How do we live while waiting for Jesus to come back? We follow Jesus and tell everyone about Him.*

• Big Picture Question Poster

Respond through song and prayer

SAY • The Thessalonians were going through many sad and hard things, so Paul wrote them a letter to give them hope. 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. **Paul encouraged the believers in hard times.**

• Main Point Poster
• "I Have Hope" song
• "I Will Stand" song
• "One" song
• offering basket

Sing "I Have Hope" and "I Will Stand" as preschoolers move with the music. Prepare for prayer by singing "One." You may also collect an offering.

SAY • Thank You, Jesus, for the promise that You will come back one day. Help those going through hard times to remember Your promise and be encouraged. Amen.

Transition to experience the story

• countdown video (optional)

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LOW PREP

- “I Have Hope” song (optional)
- “All Scripture” song (optional)

Freeze dance

Play music and encourage children to dance until the music stops. When the music stops, they must freeze. Vary the time between stopping and starting the music.

SAY • **Paul encouraged believers in hard times.** He taught that believers can live with hope because Jesus will come again. No one knew when the music would stop, just like no one knows when Jesus will come back. Isn't that exciting?

LOW PREP

- Sample situations:
- Get ready for school.
 - Get ready for church.
 - Get ready for dinner.
 - Get ready for exercise.
 - Get ready for bed.

Get ready

Invite a volunteer to play out getting ready for different situations without using their voices. Ask children for what the volunteer needs, and take suggestions. End the activity with the volunteer getting ready for Jesus to come back by playing out things she can do until then.

SAY • *How do we live while waiting for Jesus to come back? We follow Jesus and tell everyone about Him.*

LOW PREP

Show your emotions

Encourage children to show you with exaggerated emotions how they feel in specific sad, frustrating, or enraging situations, and then how happy they will feel when Jesus

comes back.

SAY • Paul encouraged believers in hard times, and his words encourage us too. Sometimes we feel sad or angry, but Paul reminds us that Jesus is coming back. *How do we live while waiting for Jesus to come back? We follow Jesus and tell everyone about Him.*

Cloud and cup craft

Print enough “Jesus” printables on heavyweight paper so each preschool has one Jesus cutout. Cut a small hole in the top of a cup for each preschooler. Thread string through the hole and tie a knot at the top. Instruct children to color the cup blue, glue small pieces of the cotton balls around the bottom of the cup like clouds, and color Jesus. Tape Jesus to the bottom of the string so that when the knot on top of the cup is pulled up, Jesus will go up into the cup. Jesus can also be pulled back down.

SAY • Paul encouraged believers in hard times. He taught them that Jesus will come back. Our craft will remind us that Jesus is coming back, so even in hard times we can have hope.

- “Jesus” printable
- paper cups
- scissors (adult use)
- string or yarn
- crayons
- glue
- cotton balls
- tape

What a happy day

Provide each child with paper and watercolor paint. Play joyful music as you encourage children to paint what it would be like on the day Jesus comes back.

SAY • Paul encouraged believers in hard times. He told them that Jesus will come back, then the believers would not suffer any more. What a happy day!

- painting smocks
- paintbrushes
- watercolor paint
- heavyweight paper
- small cups of water
- “I Have Hope” song (optional)
- “All Scripture” song (optional)

Transition to review the story

- countdown video (optional)

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Review

Point to the giant timeline or big story circle as you review today's Bible story. Ask the following review questions:

- Bible
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle
- Main Point Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Key Passage Poster
- "I Have Hope" song
- "All Scripture" song

1. Whom did Paul send to Thessalonica? (*Timothy*)
2. When Timothy returned to Paul what good news did he tell him? (*Even though following Jesus was not easy, the believers did not give up.*)
3. What good news did Paul write to the Thessalonians about Jesus? (*Jesus will come back.*)
4. Will believers suffer after Jesus comes back? (*no*)
5. ***How do we live while waiting for Jesus to come back? We follow Jesus and tell everyone about Him.***

SAY • 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.

Sing the unit theme song or key passage song.

Pray

Invite preschoolers to tell you any prayer requests they have.

SAY • God, we are so grateful for Your Son, Jesus. Thank You for giving us the promise that He will come back and end all pain. Thank You that believers will live with You forever. Amen.

Missions story

If your preschool ministry is planning a missions activity, discuss the activity, the reasons for it, and your group's progress. If you are not participating in a missions activity, talk about how we can give others hope by telling them about Jesus. You may also show the "Every Day Share Jesus" video.

- "Every Day Share Jesus" video
- "Missions Prayer Cards" printable, 1 per child

SAY • Kennedy gave us some good advice for how we can tell our friends about Jesus every day. We can share the hope we have in Jesus with everyone we meet, just like Kennedy and her family do. ***How do we live while waiting for Jesus to come back? We follow Jesus and tell everyone about Him!***

Play out happy things

Invite preschoolers to take turns playing out something that makes them happy. Encourage their friends to guess what makes them happy. Be prepared to offer suggestions.

SAY • It's fun to play out happy things, but the believers in our Bible story were not happy at first. They faced hard times because they loved Jesus. **Paul encouraged believers in hard times** by reminding them that Jesus will come back. When Jesus comes back, He will take away all pain forever!