

# Open the Word

## Paul's world

**WEB** Read the background material on Paul and life in Thessalonica.

Print out copies of this week's *Paul's world – life in Thessalonica* Sheet **WEB** for the children to read, or hold one up, read out the text and show them the pictures. Start with the *Life today* questions, then use the *Imagine* section to take children back into Paul's first-century world. This week, we learn about the difficulties which living in darkness meant for the people of Thessalonica.



## Present the reading Open the Bible at 1 Thessalonians 2,4-5

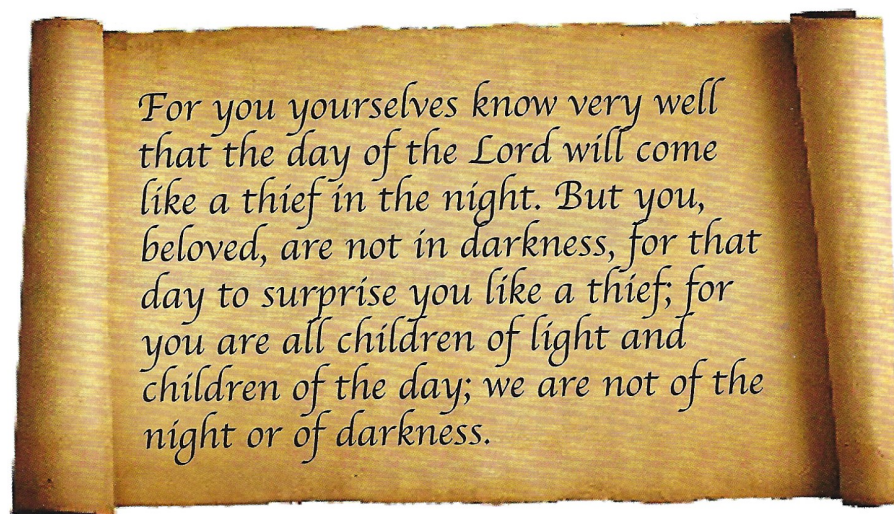
Paul reminds us to always remember to live as children of light.

Choose from these two ways of exploring a 'nugget' of Paul's teaching.

**Light it up** Give each child a lit torch (or other safe light source), and when you get to the point in the passage that talks about night, ask them to turn the light out. Stay in darkness until the passage mentions children of the light, at which point the children can switch on their torches and notice the contrast between dark and light.

**Like a thief** Choose a child to mime the part of the thief as you read the passage. Divide the rest of the group into 'children of darkness' and 'children of light'. The children of darkness should be blindfolded (or have hands over their eyes). Encourage the 'thief' to pounce on each group in turn, as the verses are being read. The children 'in darkness' should get a shock, while the children of light will see the thief coming. Swap over with different roles and then discuss how it felt to be children of darkness or children of light.

## Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter 5, verses 2, 4 and 5



## Talk together

- What do you think it means to be called 'children of light'?
- Do you feel differently about things when it's dark – or when it's light?
- How can you be a child of the light this week?

## For very young children

Play and explore what it means to be children of light.

**Play materials:** sources of light, e.g. battery-operated candles, glow sticks, torches.

## Storytelling

Use a glove, finger or wooden spoon puppet for Paul, as he talks to his friends:

I have an exciting message for you today!  
Jesus is coming –  
but we don't know when.  
But we'll be ready, won't we?  
Because we are children of light;  
we don't live in the darkness,  
but in the light of God.  
So, don't fall asleep like other people do.  
Be awake, be ready, so that you don't get  
a big surprise.

## Play

Provide materials that represent night and day for the children to explore: black materials, a moon, glow in the dark stars; light blue material and an object to symbolise the sun.

## Create

Make a lantern for each child by folding sheets of A4 card in half lengthways, then cutting strips along the folded edge. Join the two short edges together with tape and bend the card to make the slits in the sides stand out. Add a handle for the top using a strip of card. Write the words 'We are children of light' round the top of the handle and invite the children to decorate the lanterns using pens, stampers, stickers and other craft materials.

## Praise

Turn the lights out and ask the children to sit on the floor. Explain that when you turn the lights on, they are to jump up and move slowly round the room. Repeat several times.

## Pray

Gather the children together in a circle while all holding battery-operated tealights. Invite everyone in the circle to walk one way and then the other, to represent walking as children of light.

Find more prayers opposite and additional activities on the next page.

**WEB** Very young children page with more activities, prayers and songs.



# ROOTS YOUNG PEOPLE

Go to [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com) for all templates, links and images. Find Bible notes and more prayers on p.16. Use the BIBLE section below first, then choose activities from the other sections. Extra ideas can be found in *Explore & respond* opposite.

## EXPLORE

### The light inside 5 mins E S

Invite the young people to take turns to be blindfolded and given objects to feel and guess what they are. Discuss the parallel that, just like our experiences help us to recognise objects even when we can't see them, our faith (the light inside us) can help us know what to do, even when we're in dark or difficult situations.

### Jam jar lanterns 15 mins E S

Give each young person a small jam jar and a tealight. Ask them to pour a small amount of sand into the base of the jam jar and then add the tealight. Invite everyone to draw designs on their jam jar, using glass or marker pens. Encourage the young people to use their lanterns to pray at home this week, reminding them to do this safely.

## BIBLE Paul's letters 1 Thessalonians 5.1-11

### Warm up 5 mins E S

Before the session, move some furniture around, add some objects to the room that wouldn't normally be there, or do something different with your appearance, e.g. hairstyle. Ask if anyone notices anything different about you/the room today. Talk about how aware we are (or aren't) of the things around us.


### Impacting opposites 5 mins W E S

Read the passage aloud together. Ask the young people to identify the different opposite symbols used (dark/light, night/day, drunk/sober, awake/asleep). Then ask them to devise actions for each pair. When the group has finished, encourage them to read the passage again, and to highlight the set of opposite symbols that most impact them personally. Invite individuals to share which symbols they chose and why.

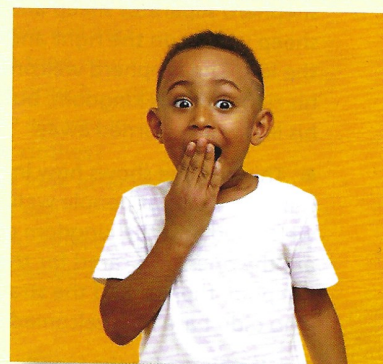
### Questions to discuss

- What sort of image could we use today for something happening suddenly, like a 'thief in the night'?
- What are we being asked to do instead of 'falling asleep'?
- How should being a 'child of the light' affect our thoughts and actions? Or influence others?

### Picture pointers WEB

Questions for reflection 

- ▶ When have you been completely surprised by something or someone?
- ▶ How do you feel about the idea of something coming like a 'thief in the night'?
- ▶ How might we be better prepared to live as children of light?




## CONNECT

### Woke 10 mins W E A

Ask the young people for their understanding of the word 'woke'. Urban Dictionary defines the modern term woke as being aware, and 'knowing what's going on in the community'. Discuss: how woke are we, as Christians, to the issues in our world today? What are we doing about them?

### Choices 10 mins W E

Watch and listen to the music video 'In the light' by DC Talk (see link on WEB) with the young people. Discuss some scenarios, such as friends gossiping, being offered an illegal download of a movie, seeing somebody drop a £10 note, having to choose between sport and church on a Sunday. Ask the young people: as children of the light: what are we called to do in these situations? Is the answer always clear cut?

WEB PostScript: Linking this week's reading to the news 

## Listen

WEB See *Young People* page or *Hymns, songs & music* for links to these tracks.

Ready Set Go (feat. Capital Kings), Royal Tailor on *Royal Tailor*  
Children of Light, Kristian Stanfill on *Passion: Let the Future Begin*  
Your Love Awakens Me, Kutless on *Alpha/Omega*

## PRAY

### Let your light shine 5 mins E S A

Ask the group to think of one way in which they will live in the light this week. Turn the lights off and let each young person light their own jam jar lantern (see *Explore*) as a symbol of their commitment to shine. Then say together this quote from Marianne Williamson (see WEB): 'As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.' If you have not made jam jar lanterns, arrange tealights in the shape of the cross, and invite the young people each to light one.

### Awareness prayer 5 mins E S

Guide the young people through the five steps of the Ignatian awareness prayer (see WEB), to help them develop awareness of God and their own spirituality.

## Live your faith

Try and fill the darker evenings this week by doing something to shine a light for others, e.g. spending time with someone who is lonely or walking a dog for a neighbour who doesn't like going out in the dark. **E A**