

First Thessalonians

MARK IT UP

HomeGroup **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week 7: May 22nd-28th

Special note: Sermon questions will not be produced after the last week of this series on May 30th. We encourage our HomeGroups to break from meeting weekly over the summer so everyone can have a time of rest and reinvigoration before the fall. Even so, groups are encouraged to make plans to stay in touch over the summer.

WE ASSUME YOU'VE ALREADY DISCUSSED YOUR SUMMER PLANS FOR YOUR GROUP. IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T, THOUGH, PLEASE DO SO THIS WEEK! IT WOULD BE GREAT TO MAKE A PLAN FOR STAYING IN CONTACT OVER THE SUMMER EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT YET SURE WHETHER YOUR GROUP WILL BE REMAINING TOGETHER THIS COMING FALL.

Main Texts: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

Connect

1. When you think about Christ's coming, or return, what do you think about? What comes to mind?

This may be a "yawner" question for some, but it also might be a topic that people have a lot to share. Try your best to keep the conversation general rather than too specific about details about things like the timing or exact sequence of events at Christ's coming.

2. What did you find significant about the sermon or passage? What questions or thoughts did it raise for you?

Learn

3. Read the passage. What is Paul's clearly stated purpose in verses 13-14 of chapter 4? What do you think it means to "not grieve as others do who have no hope"?

Paul is addressing a concern about the state of believers who have already died. Will they somehow miss out on or be disadvantaged when Christ comes? His purpose is stated in the phrase quoted. Grief is appropriate and natural and even good as people around us die. Our grief should be accompanied by hope, though.

4. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul describes the resurrection of Jesus as a kind of "firstfruits." How and where do you see that similar idea reflected in 4:13-18?

Check out 1 Cor 15:20 and 23. It is clear from Paul's words to the Thessalonians that Jesus' resurrection was the first of many that would follow, just as the first of a harvest is

followed by many other fruits. We will be resurrected one day in a way that resembles Jesus' resurrection.

5. What do you think it means for “the day of the Lord to come like a thief in the night”? How could the description in 5:2-3 possibly be an encouragement (see verse 5:11) to the Thessalonians?

This speaks to the unexpected nature of Jesus' coming and His judgment. It's not something that can be scheduled or predicted as many have attempted to do (and failed 100% of the time). It may be strange to think that this is encouraging, but we should remember that the Thessalonian Christians were subject to opposition from the unbelievers around them. Their life was undoubtedly very difficult in comparison to what most of us experience; thus, Christ's coming means vindication and perfect justice.

6. How would you describe the action(s) the Thessalonians should take based off verses 5:4-11?

Included here are the calls to live in the light, in the day, and in soberness. There's a spiritual vigilance or alertness called for in comparison to a spiritual apathy or lethargy conveyed by the night, darkness, and drunkenness. Moreover, they are to think of faith, love, and hope as a defense against being unprepared for Christ's coming. This is an easy question to jump off into application...What does it look like for us to live this way?

Apply

7. These verses—especially those in chapter 4—have inspired a number of different views on Jesus' future coming. In Paul's own words, though, what should we be focusing on from this passage?

The passage emphasizes the hope we're called to have in the face of grief, that we will be with the Lord forever once Christ returns, and the call to encourage and build up one another until He returns.

8. It's clear from verses 4:18 and 5:11 that the coming of Christ is meant to be an encouragement to us. Is it? What might keep us from being eager for Jesus' coming? There are a lot of things that might keep us from being eager for Christ's coming! For example, we might love our current life too much, we might not understand what it means to be with Jesus, or someone might not yet be a Christian. These are a few possibilities.

9. What do you think it looks like for us as a church (or you individually) to live in the “light,” in the “day,” and in “soberness” as we await the coming of Christ? Is there something we/you need to stop or start doing?

The contrast of these two ways of living has been described by commentators as the difference between being spiritually alert and spiritually apathetic. This question is an

opportunity for self-examination about our own alertness or apathy toward the things of God.

10. Paul mentions in both 4:17 and 5:10 that all who are in Christ will be with Christ... forever. What do you think it will mean for us to be with Him like this?

Paul is emphasizing this aspect of Christ's coming—that we will be with Him always. Jesus is the King of king and Lord of lords. Think of a passage like Colossians 1:15-20 where Jesus is described as “the image of the invisible God.” What do you think it will be like for us to be in His presence? What kinds of things that trouble us now will vanish as we are with Him?