**Community Group Discussion Guide**

**1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

**Sermon Overview**: This sermon will emphasize two major truths. Jesus is coming back, and it will be unexpected. Because of this, we are to live undistracted lives with the armor of God and the mission of God ever before us. We are to use end times theology to encourage and build each other up.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12*

*Set the Context…*

**Context**: Paul has begun to iron out some end times theology for the Thessalonians. At the close of chapter 4 he sought to help them understand that Jesus would one day return and rapture his people to be with him in the clouds. With this, he encouraged them that no believer who had died before this event would have somehow missed it. Having started the conversation on the second coming of Christ, Paul will now unpack details on its timing and significance.

**Commentary:** Paul refers to the second coming of Christ as the “**Day of the Lord**” (Zeph. 1:14-18), a reference to the day when the Lord will judge the earth in righteousness. It will be a day of blessing for believers, but terrifying wrath and vengeance for unbelievers. He reminds the Thessalonians that there is no need to write to them about the times and seasons of when it will take place, “***For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night***.” (1 Thess. 5:2) This truth about the imminent and sudden advent of our Lord was taught by Jesus himself. No one, not even the Son of God himself, knows when this day will come. (Matthew 24:36, Acts 1:6-7) It will catch many people unsuspecting and unprepared. However, Paul encourages the Thessalonians that since they have been saved by faith in Christ, they are “***not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.***” (1 Thess. 5:4) Christians are aware of the day of the Lord, and though it will be sudden and unexpected, we are dressed in readiness. As children of light, we are to prepare ourselves for that day. Paul repeatedly admonishes the believers to keep ***awake*** and be ***sobe***r. The Bible uses the word sober to describe spiritual alertness. In other words, with the return of the Lord in view, Christians are to live alertly making the most of the time we have remaining for God’s kingdom advancement. Without a spiritual alertness Christians make themselves susceptible to the attacks of Satan and his schemes in this world. (Luke 21:34-36) The walk of a sober minded Christian is to “…***put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.***” (1 Thess. 5:8) Through this there is deliverance as we wait upon the Lord.

Paul ends this portion by lifting the Thessalonian’s eyes onto the hope of the gospel. “***For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him***.” (1 Thess. 5:9) Christians can be encouraged that those whose trust remains in the person and work of Christ have no need to shrink in fear at the day of the Lord, but they can instead long for it with great anticipation and joy. As in the previous chapter, Paul instructs the Thessalonians to use this theology to encourage one another and build one another up. This knowledge is not meant for personal education only, but for ministry to others.

*Share main truths of the passage along with verses that teach them* and discuss how to apply to our daily lives …

**Key Points:**The timing of the Day of the Lord is unknown, making it imminent v.1-3

Christians are to live spiritually alert looking to the Day of the Lord v.4-8

With the hope of the gospel, we are to encourage and build up one another v. 9-11

**Discussion and Application Questions:**

Verses 1-3

1. Many of our friends, family, and neighbors are likely not prepared for the Day of the Lord. How should your prayers and conversations be impacted by this reality?
2. Read 2 Peter 3:8-10 in light of today’s passage. How can we have hearts that reflect the Lord’s?
3. If we are not to focus on the “times and seasons” of the return of Christ, what should we concern ourselves with as it relates to the end times?
4. How could you turn a conversation that is focusing on “times and seasons” of the return of Christ towards the gospel with unbelievers, and to sanctification with believers?
5. The Day of the Lord is when God will bring perfect justice to a broken world. How does this impact the way we view and engage brokenness in the world around us?

Verses 4-8

1. Would you describe your life as spiritually alert/awake/sober? If yes, why? If no, what steps can you take to grow?
2. What does missional living and making disciples have to do with walking in the light and keeping awake spiritually?
3. As a brother or sister in Christ, how can you take responsibility for others in community to walk in the light being prepared for the day of the Lord?
4. Because of the gospel, we do not have to fear wrath at the coming of the Lord. But how does the imminence of His return work positively to help us fight for holiness and sanctification?
5. Usually when we walk in the darkness, we are isolated from community. How will you prioritize not walking alone in this next season of life?

Verses 9-11

1. Is there someone you could encourage or build up with the truths of this passage this week? How will you be intentional to connect with them?
2. Are you an encourager? What kinds of things can you focus on to become more of an encourager?
3. How does verse 9 strengthen your faith and repentance when you have failed or fallen into sinful patterns?
4. How do you avoid using theology to be combative and cutting to others rather than uplifting?

*Share a key take away or challenge for the week…*

*Pray together in light of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11…*

**Prayer Guide:**

Pray for our church that we would be those who are spiritually alert. Pray that the imminent return of Christ would be on our hearts and minds, making us more zealous to live for him and to prioritize his kingdom advancement. Pray that our theology would translate into encouragement and edification of the entire body of believers.

Pray for our city that those who are not ready for the day of the Lord would humble themselves and make their paths straight before the Lord. Pray for other churches who are doing gospel ministry in our city to focus on the implications of Christ’s return in preaching and discipleship.

Pray for our world that in his patience and mercy God would prepare and send more missionaries to preach the gospel. Pray for those who are laboring for children of light in really dark places of unreached and unengaged peoples.