February 18/19, 2023

Living as Children of Light

A People of Hope Series

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Pastor Ryan Harmon

Imagine with me for just a moment that God came to you and gave you special knowledge that allowed you to say with absolute certainty that, at some point over the next week, Jesus would return. You don't know the exact moment, but you know that this is your last service at Lincoln Berean. Before the week comes to a close, Jesus will return, and you knew that with certainty. As you think about that, a question I have for you is, "Is there anything about your week that would look different?" Armed with that knowledge, is there anything or any way you'd go about your week that would be drastically different from another week, a normal week? Would you approach your work differently, your friendships differently, the way you engage with your family? Would it be different? Would it make any difference?

Now, of course, it's a hypothetical question. But I think all of us in this room know that there's a long history of people making predictions about precisely when the return of Christ is going to occur. 1988 was a big year for a lot of these predictors. That was a time when a lot of people thought this was going to happen, and spoiler—it didn't. It didn't happen. But when these predictions occur, when a date is set on the calendar or a year is set, so often people kind of go into a frenzy, and they start changing their manner of life. And sometimes it has tragic results. I know there have been people who have quit their jobs because they thought, "What's the point? If Jesus is coming back, why work?" There's actually one case in Korea, I believe it was, where there was a date predicted, and people decided what they were going to do is run up their credit card bills. They maxed out their credit cards, because the assumption was, "Hey, no one is going to be there to collect the bill…so let's live it up." Knowledge of the coming of Christ, or at least supposed knowledge, resulted for them in a mindset that said, "Let's just go crazy!"

So what about you? If you knew that Jesus was going to return in the next week, would anything look different? Well, that's what we want to consider together this morning as we continue our study of First Thessalonians. So open your Bibles with me to 1 Thessalonians, Chapter 5. We're going to be walking through verses 1 through 11. Last week, you'll remember, that there was a question concerning the Thessalonians that Paul had to address. They were concerned at the coming of Christ, what would happen to those who had passed away, loved ones who had passed away prior to His coming? Would they have missed it? What's going to happen? And as Bryan walked through that text, he reminded us that Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians was that we will be reunited—those who have fallen asleep and those who are still awake will be reunited with Christ…and we will live together forever! What an astounding hope we have!

And as we turn to chapter 5, there are still some questions that the Thessalonians have about things in the future. This realm of theology we call eschatology, which is just a big theological word that means *last things*, that which will occur at the end. So Paul begins here in verse 1 of chapter 5:

> **Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.** (*NASB, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)

So, the topic is **the times and the epochs**. Your translation might say the ***times and the seasons*** or the ***eras***. What Paul is referring to here is this practice that was common then and is still common today, of looking at the Scriptures and trying to decipher exactly when Jesus is going to return. And you know, sometimes today it's still done with charts and calculations and algorithms, and there's an exact day and a date is set. Paul is referring to that type of thinking, that type of practice, common back then, common still to this day, but he knew and he said to them, "I have no need to give you any new information on this." They knew that exact knowledge of that day is not something that we can attain. He says to them, "**For you yourselves know full well**…" (It's a word that really depicts that they had incredibly accurate knowledge, their theology was good on this matter)…"**You yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night."**

The day of the Lord is a phrase that has a lot of rich biblical depth to it. It occurs throughout Scripture, and really refers to this coming day, this future day when God will set all things right, when all that is broken will be fixed, will be rectified. And it is certainly depicted as a day of judgment, a day when the just Judge will declare a final judgment. And there is a sense of doom that comes with this sense of the day of the Lord because there are people who are adamantly opposed to God. They have chosen to make a habit of magnifying themselves over against the God of all creation. So there is this sense that this coming day of the Lord is going to be a day of judgment, when those who are opposed to the Creator and the Ruler of the world, will be finally and ultimately justly dealt with. To our modern ears, I think this sounds somewhat severe, even vindictive. And so we want to think well about this, and I think it helps to kind of pull back and think about the whole biblical picture.

So we have to remember, our Bibles don't start with sin. Our Bibles don't begin in Genesis 3; it doesn't begin with the story of the fall. But the story begins with our good God, creating a good world. Right? God is good. And that word barely captures what He is. There's just no One better than Him. Take the best person you can possibly imagine. Multiply it times infinity, and you come closer to just how incredibly good God is. And out of His goodness, He created everything that is. He made man and woman in His very image, and He made them with the intent that He would dwell with them, that He would walk with them in constant, interactive relationship, and that they would dwell with Him. We have that beautiful scene in the garden where He is walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and Eve were intended to live with Him in that type of relationship. But of course, we all know what happened. Sin did enter; rebellion did enter, and along with it, corruption and decay and futility entered. But that is not what God intended. And there is a day coming, this future **day of the Lord,** when God will set all things right, and that which is crooked will be made straight, that which is broken will be restored. It's a day when God's creative intent will culminate in a new creation, and the life that He intends for human beings to live with Him, will be made possible once again, fully and ultimately.

That day of setting things right, that day of reckoning, does bring with it a sense of justice. But I think when we consider the goodness of God and the fact that there are people that look at Him and say, "I want nothing to do with you, I think I do this better than You," there is a sense where it is completely appropriate and proper for that to be a day of justice and a day of judgment. There are people opposed to God, and therefore this day will be a day of judgment. I think we have to admit that when we think about that day, when we consider future things, it seems perfectly reasonable to start to have a curiosity stir up within us and to say, "Boy, I'd love to know that day. I'd love to be able to put it on the calendar." You understand why there's a market for that because it's so curiosity-inducing for us, but Paul reminds and confirms to the Thessalonians what they already knew. Exact knowledge of the timing of that day is just not possible. He says it will come like a thief in the night. It will come with shock; it will come with surprise; it will come suddenly. Thieves generally don't send *"*Save the dates cards*"* do they? We don't get to predict that.

Then Paul, as he continues, he kind of paints that picture even more vividly saying it will come suddenly…drastically! He says it will come in the midst of people declaring that everything is normal. Peace and safety will be declared, and in the midst of that declaration, destruction will come. He says, *just like a woman in labor pains*, it just arrives out of nowhere. Suddenly life is different, suddenly life changes.

The main point in these first three verses that's helpful for us to consider is not to get caught up on the details of that day, but to understand the general picture. This is a day that will come with a shock to some. And because of that, it's understandable why it kind of makes us uncomfortable, why it seems like somewhat of an unsettling day. There's no analogy that is perfect; there's no illustrations that are perfect, especially when we're talking about the **day of the Lord.**

But as I was studying this text, I couldn't help but think about my time at a camp here in Nebraska. I want to assure you, it's not Camp Sonshine. But I do want to say it's not Camp Sonshine because this camp was a bit of a mess. The camp was a little out of control. I worked there from 1999 to 2005, and in order to protect its safety and its reputation, I'm going to keep its name kind of hidden from you and assure you that they've gotten better. But see, this camp was a bit of a mess. I went there as a kid, and I desperately hated this camp. I went there four times as a kid. My mom made me go, and two of those times I came home midweek. I found the one payphone on camp and was like, "Come get me; I will not stay here another moment!" I really wanted to watch the Bozo show. And I really wanted to eat some Grape Nuts…much more than I wanted to go run to the flagpole back and forth and do all the things that we do at camp. It was a bit of a mess, and when I went there in 1999, it was getting a bit better. There's a new director that was cleaning it up a little bit, but it still had a number of things that were not the greatest. And, in fact, I would say that this camp probably should have been shut down. If a health inspector had come through at just the wrong time, there would have been too many violations and it would have been a problem.

One little case that highlights this pretty well is that we had a groundskeeper that really had this dream of making this camp into his own personal private hunting sanctuary. And so he was busy cleaning up and mowing and doing that kind of thing too, but also raising pheasants, pheasants that he hoped to release on the land once the campers left. And so he had an incubator with all these pheasant eggs. And so they would hatch and he tried to raise them up so he could eventually kill them, you know? Interestingly enough, the problem was that the place he was doing this was

in our nurse's station. And I don't know about you, and I'm not a health inspector, but that seems like a violation. Now it wasn't a particular problem, because no one could complain about it, because that particular summer we did not have a nurse, which is a massive violation.

Now why do I say all this? Well, I say all this because I can remember with vivid emotional detail what it was like when we would be going about our normal day at camp. And then we'd look out the entrance and we'd see a car coming over the hill, and we'd see that cloud of dust behind it, and we knew the health inspector was showing up for an unannounced visit. Pure chaos! Pure terror! We'd rally together; we would figure out: how do we make sure the inspector goes to the places first that we think are a little bit above par? And how do we hide these things that are a little bit problematic? "Hurry, get the eggs and get the straw out of the Nurse's station. That's probably not going to pass code!" Pure terror! Chaos! See, when the one with power arrives upon an unsuspecting, unprepared people, it strikes terror in the hearts of those who aren't prepared.

And Paul says about some people on that day, "Destruction will come upon them suddenly. They will not escape." It's a harrowing scene he's describing. So the question is, "Should we as followers of the Lord, the one whose day it is, should we also be nervous about that day? Is that going to be a dark day for us?" I don't know if you caught it, but in those first three verses, Paul was very particular in his pronouns. He says, "Destruction will come upon *them*; *they* will not escape." Paul is giving us a bit of a hint here, that his description is relevant for those who are opposed to God. But the question is, "Will it be the same for God's people?" Verse 4:

> **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;**
> (Vs. 4-5)

Paul sets up a series of contrasts, and he kind of sets an opposition being *of the light or of the day*, against being *of the darkness, or of the night*. And he's saying that whether you are of the day or of the night is going to drastically determine what that day will be like for you. And what he's telling these Thessalonians is that, as members of Christ's own body, as sons and daughters of light, as children of light, they are free to approach that day without anxiety. He says, "But you brother," or "But you, brothers and sisters, you will not be overtaken on that day."

See, for those of us who have been made alive in Christ, all of Paul's prior description in verses 1-3, none of that applies to us. That will not be our experience on that day. Should they be nervous about that day? Absolutely not! Why? Because they know that day is coming, and they could live in anticipation of that day that is true of them. That is just as true of us today. We are people that know a day is coming in the future, and we can live in anticipation, in light of that coming day. It's knowledge that we have.

See, for those of us who are in Christ, this day will be entirely different. Why? Paul says because we currently are sons and daughters of light; we are children of light. Christ has done a work in us. Our identity has been changed, and we are now light, just as our God is called the Father of light. So, he's setting up this contrast—children of light, children of the day—versus children of darkness, children of the night. For those of the night, those who are marked by darkness, this will be a day of shock. It will be a day of surprise; it will overtake them suddenly. But for those of us that are in Christ, for children of light, while we don't know the date, we do know the day. We do

know the day is coming and what it's like, and we know what is on the horizon, and therefore we can live in light of that day; we can live in anticipation of it. So the question is, "What does it look like to live in anticipation of that day?" Paul continues in verse 6:

> **…so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.** (Vs. 6-7)

Paul's logic here is clear. He's basically saying, "Listen, since you are children of the day, since you are children of the light, participate in those activities that are daytime activities and reject those activities that are nighttime activities. Live up, essentially, to who you are. Participate in that which is a part of the day as a child of the day, as a child of the light. We are of the day. Therefore, let us be alert and sober. Reject any draw to participate in the activities of the night—drunkenness and sleepiness."

Paul's using this imagery in these words, this language of sobriety and drunkenness to really highlight the difference, to contrast the two ways of living. The Thessalonians, and therefore by extension, all believers—those of us here today that are in Christ—we are to live in a way that is alert and sober. In other words: to live prepared, live ready, live sober minded, live in anticipation, live alert. And to live alert Paul says, is to live consistent with who we are and what he is saying, is essentially, "You are children of light, therefore live as children of light." As he continues in verse 8, he gives a bit more color to what it means, a little more description to what it means to live as children of light…a child of light. Verse 8:

> **But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.**

Now you know if you catch it when you're reading, Paul loves his metaphors, and often he loves to mix his metaphors. Here he introduces a brand-new metaphor. He's already said we are children of light, children of the day. And now he adds this new metaphor, essentially to say we have been given resources to live as children of light. We have been equipped; we have been outfitted; we've been dressed up in the armor, and God intends for this armor that He has given us, to be used by us to live in a way that is in accordance with who we are, to live as children of light, to live in a way that we've been called, **having put on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.**

So often, when we think about the armor of God, I think, at least my temptation is to think I need to put that on daily; I need to put that on. It didn't say, "Put on the helmet," but catch the language here. Paul is saying it's already been put on. You have been outfitted; you have been dressed up; you have put on the breastplate of faith and love and, as a helmet, the hope of salvation. It's already done; we are not lacking in anything. God has given us everything we need to walk in a way that is worthy of the life that He has called us into, to live as a child of light. We've been dressed up in God's armor. The question for us is: "Are we utilizing what we have been given"? Pretty strange armor, isn't it? Faith, love, and hope. These words nearly always, in the New Testament, occur together, especially with Paul. Some people call it the triad of Christian living: faith and love and hope. I think of these as characteristics of life in Christ, the very character of the people of God. God is stirring up and developing, and intends that we grow in these things,

that we become people of faith, and people of love, and people of hope. That these characteristics increasingly become manifest in us.

So, I think it's good to talk about each one of these for just a moment, because these are words that we're so familiar with that sometimes they can start to lose a little bit of meaning for us. So, what does it mean to be a *person of faith*? Well, first and foremost, it certainly means that we've been saved by grace through faith, not of our own works, not of our own merit. We are people who are saved solely because we have placed our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. There is nothing that we could do, there is no way we could earn our way to God. There's nothing that we could do for ourselves. But while we were still dead, Christ died for us. And we place our confidence there; we place our faith there…our belief there. That's where we place our trust. And we are a people that are constantly growing in faith. You remember that man who said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." And so as I walk in this life with God, I'm constantly striving to trust Him more. I just want to trust Him more. And when I think about the different areas of my life—my family, my work, my friendships—all the parts that make up my life, I just want to entrust that more and more to Him, to be able to release it to Him, to grow in faith. We are people of faith. As children of light, we live by faith. We don't trust in anything we can bring about on our own; we just place our confidence, our trust in God and God alone. We are people of faith.

We are *people of love*. We're people marked by God's very love. We are aiming by God's very grace to grow in our capacity to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourself. We are grounded in this reality that God loves us more than we could ever know. But nothing, nothing could separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. And equipped with that astounding knowledge, we know that we stand in a perfectly sufficient, perfectly secure place. Therefore, we can say, "What can the world do to us? What can mankind do to us? God is for us, who can be against us?" And equipped with that knowledge, armed with that knowledge, with that sufficiency of God's love, we then are free to love even those who don't love us, to love our enemies. Because we no longer are seeking to get that from the world, we have that sufficiently from God our Father. And we're people of love, constantly seeking to bring about good for those who we encounter—our neighbors, our friends, and our family. That's our constant perspective. Oh, we don't do it perfectly of course. But we're seeking to grow in that. We are people of love.

We are *people of hope*. We are people that are filled with the hope of salvation. Hope is simply the anticipation of future good, the anticipation of future blessing, and we are people of hope because God has set us free from the power of sin and death. And He has now given us hope because we are allowed to live in a vibrant life with Him. And we're people that have a hope that looks toward the future and knows that a day is coming when what God has begun in us, He will bring to completion. We look forward to that day of the Lord when this life that we are living, living still by faith, but we long for that day when we will live by sight. We will be face to face with the Lord. We have this future hope, hope of what God will bring us into, hope of this future culmination of our salvation, that what He has begun in us, He will be faithful to bring about on that day. As Paul continues, he repeats again and gives more depth as to why we are people of hope. Verse 9:

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. (Vs.9-10)

As children of light, we are marked by hope, because on this day of future judgment, when those who are opposed to God will experience God's justice, God's judgment, God's wrath, that will not be our experience on that day. Our experience with that day will be the obtaining, the taking possession of the salvation that has begun in us, stepping fully into that which has been brought about in our life now, nothing less than this future state where we will live with Him eternally in glorious, unending relationship.

So, you remember the story doesn't begin with the fall. The story begins with the garden, with that incredible intimacy with the Father. And there is a day where we will be restored, and God will make all things new, and we will live with face-to-face relationship with Jesus our Lord. That day is coming, and we look forward to that day when all things will be fixed, all will be made straight. That day, the day of the Lord is coming, will be a day of shock. It will be a day of surprise to those who are opposed to God Himself. And, Church, let that motivate us to be people who are proclaiming the forgiveness and the life that is to be found in Christ, to those who do not know Him. Let that motivate us. And as we anticipate that day, let it be with hope, because we know that on that day, we will step together into the fullness of life with God. What a glorious day that will be! In light of that knowledge, what would it look like to live in constant, anticipatory, prepared, waiting? What will it look like to live constantly aware, constantly prepared, constantly anticipating the return of our Savior and our Teacher and our Lord and Friend, to live fully prepared and to live by faith, love, and hope, to have that be the defining texture of our life?

As I was thinking about the coming of the day of the Lord, I was reminded of a conference I was at this past week up in Mitchell, Nebraska. I got together with a bunch of pastors and families from the Berean fellowship of churches. It was a great time out there. And on Saturday morning, I had the privilege of hosting a workshop with 12 or 15 people. And there was one lady who came to my workshop that I had never met before, and she probably does not know this, but she was an incredible blessing to me. As the workshop came to an end, we were just kind of talking about just how important friendship is. But it kind of turned into a lament a little bit. I began to kind of lament, "It's just that friendship is so hard, I feel like, just the older I get, the more I find that I have to work harder and harder for friendship." And I began to talk a little bit about my time in Spain, and they probably got tired of hearing about that. But I just loved that we'd walk by a café, and I probably also had a friend that lived in that building. And so we'd just real quickly grab coffee, and it was just so simple, so easy to have these impromptu kind of connections. And as we were talking, the others in the room started to whine with me, and it was really gratifying that they joined me in that. We began to whine about "I just wish these things could happen a little bit more casually. I wish we could just bump into people and get together and friendship was kind of like that." And as we were whining, this little lady spoke up, and she said, "Oh, I love planning get-togethers with friends. I just love it that I can put a date on the calendar, because that means that for three weeks, I just anticipate how good it's going to be. I just constantly think about it every day. I see that date on the calendar, and I know it's coming. And I just revel in anticipating that day and how good it's going to be to see my friend that I love so much. I love that I get to anticipate it, and that I have to plan it. And then when the day comes, I live quite a distance away

from this particular friend, so it's just so good and so glorious when I get to be with her. And then after it's done, I love the period after, because I just get to kind of bask in the glow of that incredible kind of relationship and the incredible kind of reunion that I had with my friend. I love it that I have to plan these things. It allows me to look forward to it." And I sheepishly said, "Well, thank you for highlighting what an awful friend I am apparently." And I walked away thinking, "What a perspective!" It's the anticipation of that day that adds to the joy of it for her.

And as I'm thinking about the day of the Lord, it gets me to thinking back to the visit by the health inspector. I think about that health inspector coming in the camp and the fear it caused and the terror it caused and the shock it caused throughout the camp. And it makes me wonder, "What if that person that was coming to visit, was our friend? What if the person that was coming to visit was someone that we had a deep relationship with and what we were getting to experience was relationship from a distance, now becoming a relationship in person and we were able to look forward to that day because we knew this person was for us? And when they come, they just want to help us know how to run the camp better. When we see that gravel dust storm stirring up in the distance, we don't get filled with terror, thinking, "How do we pass the eye test? How do we measure up to this inspector's scrutiny?" We think instead, "Oh, here comes our friend! I can't wait to be with him." What if that's what we thought about the day of the Lord? What if, in fact, we'd go a step further? What if when this health inspector came, what if we were so enamored with him, we just enjoyed the friendship so much that it inspired us to live in a constant state of preparedness? Just anticipating his or her coming, just constantly ready so that when he or she comes, we can just enjoy the person, and worry less about all the details. So, I think part of what Paul wants us to think about is not so much the day, but to think about the person. It is our Lord. It is our Savior. It is our Friend who will come, and that day will be a glorious day.

Church, a day is coming. A day is coming when our God will set all things right. And for those set against Him, it will be a difficult day. Therefore, let that motivate us to be people who proclaim His goodness so that more and more might step into the light. Let that be one part of what it means for us to live as children of light. But let us also live with hopeful anticipation, constantly prepared for His coming, to live as children of light, to step fully into the life that He has begun in us.

We don't know whether it will be today or next week or a hundred years from now, but we do know the day is coming…we do know the day is coming! And so let us anticipate that reunion with prepared hearts, growing as people filled and marked by the character of faith and love and hope. How would that change the way you walk through your week? How would that change the way you walk through your days, the way you interact with your co-workers, to live constantly prepared, constantly anticipating the return of our Savior?

As this section draws to a close, Paul again kind of ends the way he ends so many of these sections in First Thessalonians, encouraging them not to just be encouraged by his very words, but also to encourage one another, to remember the critical nature of their community together. Verse 11:

> **Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.**

Encourage one another, build up one another. Therefore, he said, on the basis of what we've just heard, knowing the day of the Lord is coming, and it will be a glorious day, let us live as children of light. And let us encourage one another to live as children of light. Let us encourage one another and build up one another to live into the life that we have been called to. I've loved each week, as we've had different staff say to us as a church, to us as a body, "Hey, I am so encouraged by what I see in you." But I do wonder what would it be like not for us just to see that on a screen, but to turn to the person to our right and to our left and to say, "I am so encouraged. I'm so encouraged to see you living as a child of light. And I want to encourage you, "Keep at it. Keep it up; continue to live prepared. The Lord is coming and when He comes, it will be a glorious day. And we are children of light, therefore may we live as children of light." Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank You that by Your gracious goodness, You transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Your Beloved Son, and, Jesus, we praise You and we thank You that You are our King, and we long for the day, we anticipate the day of Your return when we will see You face to face. Lord, we ask that in these days between now and then, Lord, will You help us by your Spirit? Will You empower us to grow in grace? To grow in the characteristics of faith and love and hope, and to live as children of light, declaring Your goodness to a broken world, that more may know You and that we may live prepared. We ask that You would do it for the sake of Your glory, and in Your name, we pray, Amen.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
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WINTER 2023 // WEEK 6

Life Group Questions

A People of Hope // February 18/19, 2023

Children of Light // 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Introduction

This week Paul continues the topic of the return of Jesus and encourages the Thessalonians not to speculate on the day or time, but to be sober and alert, living as children of light. He ends this passage with another challenge to encourage one another and build each other up.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

1) **If you like to read, who is one of your favorite authors?**

2) **Which event in the Life of Christ would you have liked to have been present at?**

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
    b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
    c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

1) What is a concept, idea or theme that has stuck with you from this past weekend's sermon?

2) In the first few verses of this passage (vv. 1-3) Paul again refers to the return of the Lord Jesus with another encouragement to not speculate as to when it will be. It will come unexpectedly like a thief in the night upon unbelievers. In verses 4-6 he indicates that for the children of light (believers), it will not be unexpected and then commands them to be alert and sober. What does it look like to be alert and sober (self-controlled) as we live our lives each day?

3) If you knew Jesus was coming back in 1 week, how would it change the way you are living your life for the next 7 days? (Seek to think about this in a way that stirs up love in your heart, not pressure)

   The fact is we don't know when Jesus is coming back. How does that change the way you will live your life in the next 7 days?

4) In verse 8 Paul returns to the ideas of faith, love and hope in describing the Thessalonians as children of light. Recognizing that our life with God starts and continues with faith—simple trust in God, as you think about what it means to move through the world as a child of light, consider the chart on the next page. After filling out the chart for yourself, talk to God about your answers. Consider what you are willing to share with your Life Group.

Circle a number on the sliding scale next to each concept.
1 = "You find it easy to trust God with this."
5 = "You really struggle letting go of control for this."

God, I surrender to you, I relinquish my right to, and I trust you with:

	easy to trust. to trust.				hard
My thoughts throughout the day	1	2	3	4	5
My emotions	1	2	3	4	5
My health/body	1	2	3	4	5
My home	1	2	3	4	5
My marriage	1	2	3	4	5
My children	1	2	3	4	5
My safety and security	1	2	3	4	5
My hobbies	1	2	3	4	5
My career	1	2	3	4	5
My accomplishments	1	2	3	4	5
My failures	1	2	3	4	5
My habits/addictions	1	2	3	4	5
My financial security/retirement	1	2	3	4	5
My time	1	2	3	4	5
My talents and unique gifts	1	2	3	4	5
My sexuality	1	2	3	4	5
My attitude	1	2	3	4	5
My political views	1	2	3	4	5
My possessions	1	2	3	4	5
My reputation	1	2	3	4	5
My friendships	1	2	3	4	5
My desire to change others	1	2	3	4	5
My need to be right	1	2	3	4	5
My need to reap what I have sown	1	2	3	4	5

5) The final verse of our passage has Paul challenging the Thessalonians to encourage one another and build each other up. **Of your answers above, which are you willing to share with your Life Group, so that they can pray for you and encourage you in your walk with Jesus?**

Considering what people may share at your Life Group from the above chart, what does it look like to encourage one another and build each other up throughout the week?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

Prayer Focus: Paul commands us again to encourage each other and build each other up. Each day this week pray for a different person in your Life Group. Ask God to reveal to you how to pray for each person. Consider taking it one step further and after praying for that individual, send them a short text and let them know you prayed for them. (It will be encouraging to them!)

Scripture Focus: How does a child of light move through the world? Children of light is a regular image of the Apostle Paul. Over the course of this week, read Ephesians 5:8-16 several times, noticing the similarities to 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. As you read, listen for which verses the Holy Spirit may be pointing out to you.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of "coming together" is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say "Amen" aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?