

*The Vine***Week Five:**

October 26 to November 1, 2008

Think back to your childhood and the weeks before Christmas. You knew you were going to receive a gift you deeply desired—a doll or a toy truck, perhaps a bicycle or even a puppy. Take a moment to recall and re-experience the growing excitement, the mounting anticipation of the overwhelming joy the gifts would bring you on Christmas day. Perhaps your concern for others blooms as part of the Christmas holiday season. You feel and experience all of it due to a holiday commemorating Christ's first coming to earth.

What are your feelings about Christ's second coming? Do you feel any of the excitement and anticipation you have felt during the advent of the Christmas holiday? Are you concerned for the plight of others on that day? Perhaps you are not the least bit emotional about it. Perhaps you are confused about it. Perhaps you fear it.

In this week's study we will look at some of the Apostle Paul's counsel regarding the day of Christ's return. By studying what the early Christians thought and felt about Christ's return we can gain a better understanding of our own expectations on that day.

*Day One***Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

What are some things that immediately stand out to you?

Think back over the entire book and consider a few things. Consider what you have learned so far in your study of 1 Thessalonians. What are your two favorite verses in the letter so far? In what practical ways have you applied what you have studied?

Also consider your personal level of anticipation of Christ's return. How much do you hope and pray about Jesus coming back? Keep that on your mind as we look into God's Word this week.

Prayer Reflection: Spend some time in prayer and ask the Lord for sensitivity to what He is doing inside you and around you. Ask Him to reveal what He wants to teach you. Ask Him to show you what He wants for your friends and family. You do not need to rush. Spend some time asking the Lord big questions.

Day Two

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

This is a letter that Paul, Silas and Timothy wrote to a young church. This young church had big questions. Looking at this passage, could you guess a few of their questions?

Going Deeper

The Second Coming of Christ

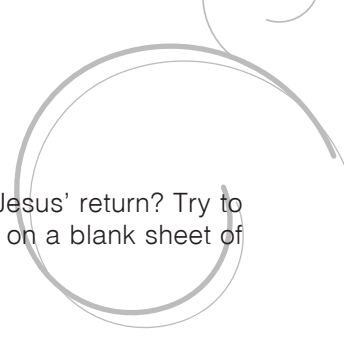

One way to expand your knowledge on a particular topic is to use a Bible dictionary, a topical Bible or a concordance. Many study Bibles include a topical reference section in the back as well as a small concordance and dictionary. Here are some examples of what brief research can reveal:

Looking up the "Second Coming" will reveal that it is a phrase not used in the Bible. At the same time you might find a reference to the Greek word *parousia* meaning "presence after absence", used in reference to the return of Christ four times in 1 Thessalonians as well as numerous other scriptures. These passages give advice and direction regarding the Second Coming.

You could also discover that Old Testament references to the return of Jesus are usually noted as "The Day of the Lord" and are often dreary prophecies as found in Isaiah 13:6, Joel 2:11 and Amos 5:18 to name a few.

You'll be amazed at how each reference will lead to other scriptures that give a deeper and broader perspective on your chosen topic. Happy fishing!






What are some of the specific details listed about Jesus' return? Try to imagine the scene. If you feel up to it, try to draw it on a blank sheet of paper. What would it sound like?

Why does he say sleep?

How are they to be different than "the rest of men"?

How can we encourage one another with these words?



Prayer Reflection: In your prayer time, spend a few minutes reflecting on the peace and joy it would give you to meet the Lord in the air. When Jesus returns, He is coming back for you, for His people. Rejoice that we will be forever with Him. As you pray for your day and your needs, keep this in mind. You may even want to pray for your day by saying, "In light of your return, I pray for..." This can help us keep proper perspective.



Day Three

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Paul begins by discussing time. What two illustrations about time does he use? What is the same about both illustrations? What is different? What do these things say about the timing of the Lord's return?

In verse 3 it mentions people who are saying "Peace and safety" when they are actually close to destruction. These would be false teachers. Why would it have been so tempting to listen to these false teachers? Who are the false teachers today who say "Peace and safety" with little regard to eternal consequences?





According to verse 6-8, how are we to live? These verses are good by themselves, but they are put within a passage about Christ's return. How does the context of these verses focus their meaning?


Prayer Reflection: Talk to the Lord about His return. Discuss with Him how you would feel if He would arrive today. Praise Him for who He is. Ask Him to help you align your day so that He would be pleased with it.

Day Four

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 5:11

How were they to prepare for Christ's return?

As followers of Jesus, how does this passage say we are to think about the Day of the Lord? How do you feel about the Day of the Lord? Are you excited? Do you pray for it to come today? Are you a bit frightened about it?



For further digging, look at 2 Peter 3 and Matthew 24, especially verses 30-44, and notice similar themes and ideas. This shows that the ideas shown in 1 Thessalonians were understood by the early church. Dig into these passages as you have time.

Prayer Reflection: Pray about anything in your life that would embarrass you if Christ were to show up today. Ask Him for help to remove those things from your life. Pray specifically knowing that Jesus loves you, died for you, and wants to help you.

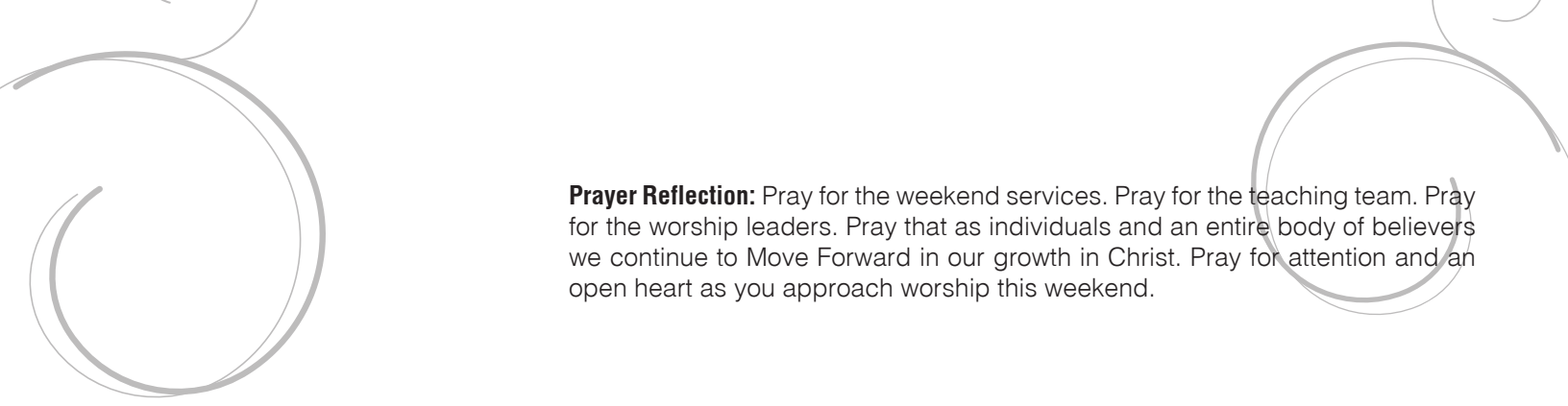
Day Five

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 5:11

Why should anyone have hope when considering death? Why should you?

Twice it says “encourage one another” with the concept that Jesus is returning. How does that encourage you? In what specific ways can you encourage those around you with the idea that Jesus is coming back? Pray about it. Make it your goal to encourage someone in the next 24 hours by saying, “Jesus is coming back!”





Prayer Reflection: Pray for the weekend services. Pray for the teaching team. Pray for the worship leaders. Pray that as individuals and an entire body of believers we continue to Move Forward in our growth in Christ. Pray for attention and an open heart as you approach worship this weekend.

You may receive The Vine electronically at www.kentwoodcommunitychurch.org/thevine. You may download The Vine there or you may subscribe and have The Vine sent via e-mail to you each week.



Written by The Vine Team.
Send an e-mail to thevine@kcconline.org with comments or questions. We would love to hear what you think about it. If you have a heart to help create The Vine, let us know that you are interested in joining the team.

