I Thessalonians Series 5  
Waiting for the Lord’s return with a living hope  
March 11, 2016

I. WELCOME, 15 mins.
Prepare a couple of simple, fun and delightful icebreakers to help your group warm up. Help your cell group members to lay aside their busyness and tiredness and prepare their hearts to come before God.

II. WORSHIP, 20 mins.
Prayerfully choose a few songs to lead the cell group members to worship God. The worship leader would encourage members to come before the throne of God to seek God’s face, and lead them into God’s presence. During this time, the cell group leader will also lead the group to pray aloud for the following prayer items:

A. MISSION ORGANIZATION: _____________, and their needs are: _____________
(Please contact the church if you don’t know the needs of the mission organization.)

B. CHURCH MINISTRY:
• 3/12 Men’s Breakfast @ 9:30am in Fellowship Hall
• 3/13 & 3/20 Christ-Centered Scriptural Reading Class
• 3/13 Daylight Savings, don’t forget to push clocks 1 hour forward!
• 3/16 Bi-Weekly Prayer Meeting
• 3/25 Good Friday Service @ 7:30pm in Emmanuel Chapel
• 3/27 Easter Sunday Celebration
• 3/30 Bi-Weekly Prayer Meeting

C. New comer: ________________ Confirm new comers’ name before the meeting.
For sick members, friends or relatives: ________________ Please discuss how you may show your care to them.

III. WORD, 45 mins. Through sharing and discussing God’s word, the group applies it to their daily life.

A. Sharing the message from last Sunday’s sermon: (It would be helpful if you could listen on-line once again)
1. What is the key message from last Sunday’s sermon? How did God speak to you through the message?
2. How would you respond to the message? What action will you take after listening to the message?

B. Topic of the week: Waiting for the Lord’s return with a living Hope

Verses: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
Memorizing Verses: He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. (1 Thessalonians 5:10)

Preface:
In the previous passages, Paul taught the Thessalonians that before the return of Jesus Christ, they need to actively obey the command of the Lord and live a life that is pleasing to God. Paul continued to teach them of the hope that Jesus will return and urged them to live everyday with alertness and soberness and to comfort and edify one another to welcome our Lord’s return.

1. The hope that the Lord will certainly return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
   A. The deceased believers will be resurrected (13-14):
   (1) The reason we become sorrowful when we confront death is because we don’t understand the meaning of death. Of course, when our loved ones pass away we will weep and grieve, this is our human nature. However, all who believe in Jesus will not lose hope over death, because death is not the end of everything. Paul uses the phrase “those who have fallen asleep in Jesus” to explain the death of the believers because their death wasn’t the end, but instead they have fallen asleep in Jesus. They were in paradise and in the embrace of Jesus. When the Lord returns they will certainly be resurrected and the believers who are still alive will certainly meet them again in the Lord. This is our hope in Jesus Christ.

(1) When Jesus returns, God will resurrect the deceased believers and give them a new body. The bodies of the living believers will be changed too (1 Corinthians 15:52) and they will be caught up together in the cloud with the resurrected believers to meet the Lord. When Jesus came to the world for the first time, God only sent
angles to tell a small number of shepherds that the Messiah Jesus Christ, the one the Israelites were eagerly hoping to come, had been born. The second coming of Jesus will be public. The sky will emit three different kinds of sounds to let everyone in the world and the believers know that: “Shout” is the signal for gathering, “Chief Angle’s voice” is the calling to the Son of Man who is sitting on the cloud to reap the harvest (Revelation 14:14-16), and “The trumpet of God” is the last trumpet sounds to gather all who are saved by their faith in Jesus.

C. We will be with God forever (17b-18): Those who were dead before the return of Jesus are in paradise. When the Lord returns, the deceased will be resurrected and the believers who are still alive will receive new bodies that will last forever. All of them will be caught up in the air to meet the Lord and be with Him for eternity. This is our hope in Christ. Therefore, we need to exhort one another regularly so we don’t lose hope.

2. Be watchful for the return of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11):
   A. The day of the Lord (1-3):
      Although many people predicted the date of the Lord’s return, none of the predictions came true. Jesus told his disciples clearly that no one knows the day and hour of His return (Matthew 24:36). He will come in an unexpected time. The Lord’s return will happen instantaneously. For the believers, as was pointed out in point 1, there are assurances for the hope of the Lord’s return. The nonbelievers not only do not realize the danger that is coming but they think that everything is under their control, just as the people in the days of Noah. “For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark” (Matthew 24:38-39). They cannot escape this disaster, just like an expecting woman cannot avoid the pain of giving birth.

   B. Be awake and sober as we wait for the return of the Lord (4-7):
      We believe in Jesus and we belong to God. We are children of light because our Lord Jesus has redeemed us from the darkness and given us a new life to live in the light of God’s kingdom. Therefore, we cannot be like the Gentiles - leading a life of pleasure to our heart’s content without a sense of danger. We ought to keep awake spiritually, follow God closely and obey Jesus’ commands. In the daytime, we should be doing the work that God has entrusted to us and live an upright life that glorifies him (John 9:4; Romans 13:13).

   C. Adhere to the life of faith, hope, and love (8-11):
      (1) We need to prepare ourselves with faith, hope, and love (8-9): We need to prepare ourselves for the Lord’s return. Therefore, we need to steadfastly believe and trust in God, and love one another because by doing so we can guard our thoughts and not fall into Satan’s evil schemes. In addition, we will not be subjected to God’s judgment due to Jesus’ redemptive grace and we will not suffer during the great tribulation.

      (2) Live together with Jesus (10): God forgave us of all our sins because Jesus died on the cross for us. He also gave us a new life that belongs to Him and it connects us to Jesus. So it doesn’t matter if we are alive or deceased, we will always be alive with the Lord.

      (3) Encourage and edify one another (11): We need to strengthen and support one another so that the growth of our spiritual life can be complete. We will then be able to stand firm in all trials and fulfill, with other brothers and sisters, the work that God has entrusted us.

Discussion (please choose the topic according to the needs of the members):

1. What is the one task that you want to finish before the end of the year?
2. What will happen when Jesus comes again? How does it relate to
3. How do we be awake and sober as we wait for the Lord’s return? Which one do you think is most important?

4. What is significant about the Lord’s second coming? How does it relate to you?

5. How do you prepare yourself for the return of Jesus?

Prayer:

Dear Abba Father, we thank you and praise you. Thank you for using Paul’s teaching to make us understand that when Jesus comes again, you will give those who died in Jesus Christ a new body as you resurrect them. You will also transform our bodies. You will catch all of us up in the air to meet Lord Jesus and we will be with Him for eternity. Oh Lord, please strengthen our minds so that we can keep our spirit awake and follow you. Please give us strength so that we can serve you, with the hope that you have given to us, every day with joy, all of our minds, and all of our strengths. Our prayer and thanksgiving are in the precious and holy name of the Lord Jesus, Amen!

WORK (Pray for each other), 10 mins.

Please break into groups of 2 or 3 to pray for each other’s needs.