



Still Growing: Week 7

Message Date: March 7, 2021

Primary Biblical Texts: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Purpose of the *Still Growing* Series

Still Growing is a close look at the first letter to the Thessalonians. It is a letter written to a community of people to help them keep growing. The Apostle Paul specifically focused on how to pursue faith, love, and hope with this new church in Thessaloniki. Through reading the letter, we will focus on encouraging our congregation to keep growing, as well. We also hope to teach participants how to begin reading the Bible more effectively on their own.

Message Content

This week, Christian taught us about Paul's conviction about death, and how Jesus gives us a hope that allows us both to grieve loss and trust that one day all things will be made new. Our Christian hope is not that death swallows up everything, but that God has swallowed up death, freeing us from living under the terror of its reign. God will one day bring resurrection to our lives like he brought it through Jesus. He also taught us another principle to keep in mind when we read the Bible: We sometimes need outside help. There are things within it that we won't understand without help from those that have dedicated their lives to its study.

Mixer (choose one)

1. If you could have a career doing anything you can dream of, what would it be if there are no limits on training, talent, or experience?
2. What was your favorite job in your life and why?

Introduction Questions

1. Are there any beliefs that you grew up with that you see differently as an adult? What changed? How?
2. Who or what has helped you understand the Bible? Any particular pastors or authors? Have you been able to encourage someone else in their faith or Bible-reading?
3. What did you think about Christian's sharing of the *rapture* and its root in a misreading of 1 Thessalonians 4? Did it surprise you? Challenge you?

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Scripture Study

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–15

1. What beliefs about death and the afterlife do you think most people (Christian or not) believe? What questions arise for you when you think of what comes after death?
2. What sets Christians apart in the way we handle grief? What is the hope we falsely believe in? What is the true hope that we should hold on to?
3. When you think of the resurrection of Jesus, how does this change the way you think about your own resurrection?
4. Does Jesus' hope for resurrection from bodily death also extend to the other "deaths" we die in life (death of a dream, death of a relationship, death of a season of life, etc.)?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18

1. Jesus is portrayed in these verses as a powerful warrior and mighty king—think of his "cry of command," "archangel's call," "sound of God's trumpet." What is Jesus coming to fight and defeat or lead? Why do you think Paul uses these images when writing to the Thessalonians about those who are grieving?
2. How does hearing that Christians will "be with the Lord forever" comfort and encourage you? Is there a grieving person in your life whom you could encourage today with this hope? Reach out to them and encourage them.

Personal Reflection

1. This has been a year of many losses. What losses are you grieving right now?
2. What has been helpful to you to process the grief you have had to process? What has hurt?
3. What are some "deaths" you have seen or experienced this year? What might Jesus' response to those be?

Take Time to Pray Together