



Teaching Guide
AND Essentials

- **FOR ADULTS** -



GROUP MEMBERS USE *THE BRINK*, *FUSION FAMILY*, OR *FUSION NEXT*
DEVOTIONAL STUDY GUIDES



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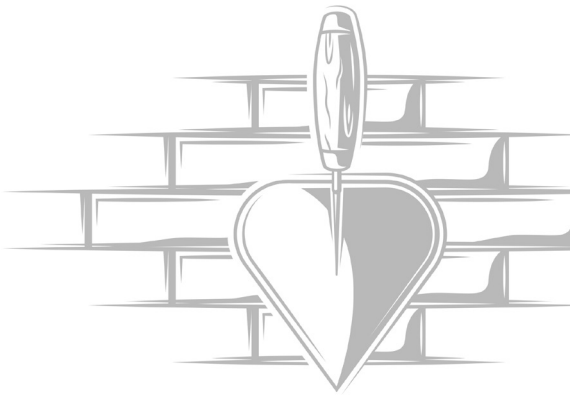


FAMILY THEME

Wait in Faithfulness

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Learners live for and serve Christ, ready for His return.

STUDY TEXT: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12



CHECKLIST

- Study the biblical text and Adult Teacher's Guide.
- Review the *Adult Teaching Outline* (Adult Handout 8-1 or AH 8-1). You can take notes on this editable document as you study. You can also use it as a guide to teach from.
- Review *PowerPoint 8* and insert your own questions if needed.
- Print and make copies of the *Adult Member Outline* (AH 8-2), the *He's Coming Back* poster (AH 8-3), the *Alert and Ready* Handout (AH 8-4), and *Parent Page* (PP-8) if necessary.
- Distribute *Parent Page* (PP-8) to those who will benefit from it.

Key Truths

- Believers Have Hope for the Future, Even in Grief
(1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)
- Believers Are to Remain Spiritually Alert and Ready for Christ's Return (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11)
- Believers Need Not Be Shaken by False Reports of Christ's Return (2 Thessalonians 2:1–12)

Verse of the
Month

1 THESSALONIANS
2:12

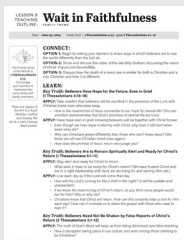
CONNECT

Choose one of the **Connect** options to capture attention and get this session started.

OPTION 1: Begin by asking your learners to share ways in which believers are to see the world differently than the lost do. Examples might include sexuality, treatment of others, work, grief, and the future. List their answers on the board. After discussion, say: *Those who know God's truth have a different outlook than those who follow the world's ways. Today we will see some of the ways we are to think and behave differently than the lost world does.*

OPTION 2: Show and discuss this video of the late Billy Graham discussing the return of Christ: [tinyurl.com/SecondBilly](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2m3j8j8j8j8). What is the most encouraging aspect of the return of Christ? Why are we able to look forward to it? Transition to the lesson by saying: *The return of Christ might happen in our lifetimes; it might not. But as we'll see today, we should remain alert for His return and look to that day with hope.*

OPTION 3: Write the following on the board: *The death of a loved one.* Then ask: *How is this experience similar for both a Christian and a non-Christian? How is it different?* After discussion, say: *Knowing Christ helps believers have a different outlook from those who are lost. Today we will see the difference that makes when a loved one dies, and in other ways as well.*



AH 8-1



AH 8-2

TEACHING TIP

Be sure to leave time at the end of the lesson to help your students think through how they can put the principles of the lesson into practice.

LEARN + EXPLORE + APPLY

Distribute copies of the *Adult Member Outline* (AH 8-2) and summarize the following to your group about the background of the text.

The return of Christ and the fate of believers who had passed away were issues that caused concern for the Thessalonians. Paul gave them encouragement and instruction regarding these issues in both of his inspired letters to them. We can gain much understanding and encouragement from his words.

KEY TRUTH: Believers Have Hope for the Future, Even in Grief (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

The gospel changes how we respond to life and to death. Paul wanted believers to understand what had become of other believers who had died or *fallen asleep* (**verse 13**). The death and resurrection experience of Jesus lay at the heart of Paul's teaching (**verse 14**). Christ's atonement for our sin would be incomplete without His role as the

first to live in permanent victory over death. Believers who have died have entered into the Lord's presence and enjoy Him in ways those of us who are still alive can only imagine.

Yet the Thessalonians feared that their dead loved ones might somehow miss the Lord's return. Paul put their fears to rest (**verses 16–18**). Christ will return visibly, publicly, and in great triumph. The dead in Christ will be raised and meet Him first. Then those still alive at Christ's return will join them, and nothing will ever again separate them. We are to comfort and encourage one another with this wonderful truth.

DISCUSS:

- *How is the resurrection of Jesus connected to our hope for eternal life? (His resurrection demonstrates that God's promises of eternal life are true.)*

EXPLORE:

Believers do not grieve or mourn our dead as those who have no hope, but we are not insensitive to loss or death either. The distinction between believers and unbelievers is that the nature of the mourning is different. Unbelievers have no hope, no assurance, concerning what happens after death. Believers, however, belong to the One who conquered death. He will bring His followers to eternal fellowship with Him as resurrected beings.

DISCUSS:

- *Even though we have hope in eternity with Christ, why does it still hurt when loved ones die?*
- *Why can Christians grieve differently than those who don't know Jesus? (We know we will see Christian loved ones again.)*
- *How does the promise of Jesus' return encourage you?*

KEY TRUTH: Believers Are to Remain Spiritually Alert and Ready for Christ's Return (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

The Thessalonians would have had fewer questions about the timing of the Second Coming had they remembered what Paul had already taught them (**verse 1**). They knew Christ will return like *a thief in the night* (**verse 2**). Just when many are talking about *peace and safety*, thinking all is well, Jesus will return and judgment will fall (**verse 3**). *Labor pains* denote a process that begins suddenly and must continue on to its natural outcome. Knowing this, Paul expected the



AH 8-3
Display the AH 8-3 *He's Coming Back* poster.

APPLY:

Take comfort that believers will be reunited in the presence of the Lord with Christian loved ones who pass away.



PowerPoint 8

The discussion questions can be found on the *Adult Teaching Outline* (AH 8-1) and on *PowerPoint 8*, which is customizable. Files *8A* and *8B* are provided for customization.

APPLY:

Have hope even in grief, knowing believers will be together with Christ forever.

Thessalonians to *not* be taken by surprise by Christ's return (**verses 4–5**). He expected them to be ready, living as people who belonged in the daylight. For such people, Christ's return will be glorious. Those who belong to the darkness, however, will find it devastating, like a thief striking without warning.

Paul did not know the precise date, but his use of *we* and *you* when discussing it seems to indicate that he thought he would see it (1 Thessalonians 4:15, 17; 5:4). What he *knew* for certain was that God has promised that Christ will return. Nevertheless, we know it involves a delay during which God has much work for His people to do. We do not have to know the timing of Christ's return to live in the sure hope and expectation of it. We should endeavor to live in such a way that we would not be embarrassed if He returned tomorrow.

APPLY:

Stay alert and ready for Christ to return.

DISCUSS:

- *What does it mean to be ready for Christ's return?* (We have trusted Christ and are in a right relationship with God; we are living for and serving Him; etc.)

EXPLORE:

In Scripture, *the Day of the Lord* (**verse 2**) often describes a time of judgment upon people and nations. Passages such as Romans 2:15–16; 1 John 4:17; Isaiah 13:9–11; and Zephaniah 1:14–18 illustrate this. Coming like *a thief in the night* means it will be unexpected.

Unbelievers are spiritually *asleep* (**verse 6**), not dead as when Paul described deceased believers (**4:13–14**). In a situation that calls for alert care, they are dozing. Dozing and drunkenness describe those who belong to the night, what is bad and wrong (**verse 7**). Believers belong to the day, what is good and right (**verse 8**). Our *hope* ensures we will wait confidently and expectantly for God to keep His promises.

God's plan to redeem believing mankind restores us to the friendship with God for which we were created. God's purpose in saving us is for us to be together with Him, both now and in the world to come (**verses 9–10**). The expectation of the Second Coming fills every day with renewed meaning. What could be more important or more encouraging (**verse 11**)?

APPLY:

Live each day as if the Lord will come that day.

DISCUSS:

- *How will the Lord's coming be like a thief in the night?* (It will be sudden and unexpected.)

• *If we knew the exact timing of Christ's return, do you think more people would live for Him? Why or why not?*

• *Christians know that Christ will return. How can this certainty help us live for Him each day? How can it motivate us to share the gospel with those who need to hear it?*

 **KEY TRUTH: Believers Need Not Be Shaken by False Reports of Christ's Return (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)**

Some serious misunderstanding of events related to the Second Coming of Christ still troubled the Thessalonian congregation (**verse 1**). The first thing Paul settled was that it had not already happened (**verse 2**). It seems some had even tried to write things in Paul's name about the Second Coming that simply were not true. Paul told the Thessalonians to avoid deception by recognizing that the Second Coming (*day of the Lord* in **verse 2**) would not occur until a rebellion occurred, and a *man of lawlessness* was revealed (**verse 3**). This *man of lawlessness* would try to set himself up above any and all deities, even proclaiming himself to be God in God's place (**verses 4-5**).

Deception is a danger to us if we do not guard against it. Satan strives to pull us away from truth, especially any truth about God. The struggle between truth and deception fills every newscast and social media page. We must fill our minds and hearts with God's Word in order to know truth and recognize deception. We cannot believe *everything* we hear. If we love God, we will love truth, and it will be harder to deceive us.

DISCUSS:

• *How is deception taking place in our culture, and even among those claiming to be Christians?*

• *How can we determine what is true? (Evaluate what we hear and read by what the Bible says; do our best to verify what is in the news, social media; etc.)*

EXPLORE:

The English word *apostasy* comes from the word usually translated as *rebellion* or *falling away* in **verse 3**. *Apocalypse* comes to us from the root of the word translated as *revealed*. So who is this *man of lawlessness*? Many associate him with the Antichrist, but that does not answer the question. Paul was not trying to help us identify an individual. He wanted us to watch for the character traits and inherent nature of anything that promotes Satan's lies to the detriment of our faith. It is no easier to identify what, or whom, is currently holding him back. Some have suggested hu-

APPLY:

The truth of God's Word will keep us from being distressed over false teaching.

man government, the Church, or the Holy Spirit. Scripture does not indicate clearly *who* is restraining. Instead, it highlights the fact that the restraint is temporary. Nevertheless, the fact that the restraint was in place, and that the lawlessness was not yet what it would be, gave hope to the Thessalonian believers. They had not missed the Second Coming!

The *man of lawlessness* would already be working on the scene if he were not being restrained (**verse 6**). Indeed, some of that lawlessness was already at work, but someone or something was actively restraining it (**verse 7**). In **verse 8** we find an interesting play on words: *the revealing of the lawless one*. The words *revelation* and *apocalypse* describe the act of revealing or uncovering something. *The lawless one* is often associated with the Antichrist. He will have his own revelation of sorts when the restraining power goes away (**verse 8**). At that point he will unleash all kinds of lawless behavior, as well as deceptive signs (**verse 9**). His power will show itself through every sort of evil. Those whom it deceives will perish. Their doom will come from their refusal to love the truth of the gospel (**verse 10**), which would otherwise have saved them.

One of the most sobering thoughts to consider about those who reject the truth is this: God will finally allow them to have their way. He will let them follow what the Bible calls a *strong or powerful delusion*, since that is the only thing they will accept. Since they spurn the truth, God will give them over to believe the lies they want to be true (**verse 11**). Just as the truth would have saved them, the lie will condemn them. Their condemnation is just, however, for they will have delighted in wickedness (**verse 12**).

Many conservative scholars hold that this describes an event that is still in the future. Even so, the power of lawlessness is already at work. Our world maintains powers, cultures, and sentiments that stand apart from all things godly. It promotes thinking that rejects the gospel of Jesus Christ. Only by *loving* the truth can believers avoid the deception that is destroying unbelievers daily.

EXPLORE:

Some theologians believe Christ's Second Coming will occur at the beginning of a 1000-year period of world peace, ruled by Jesus Himself. This is called *premillennialism*. Others believe that such an extended period of world peace will occur just *before* Christ's return. This is called *postmillennialism*. Others believe the mention of 1000 years in Revelation refers instead to Christ's complete and endless rule, present even now. This is called *amillennialism*.

APPLY:

Urge the lost to embrace the truth of God's Word and to reject the lies of the lost world.

These three major views of Christ's return all have variations. Each view has Scripture passages that seem to support it. Each view has passages that seem to fit with the opposing views. This is an area that requires our humility before the difficulty of determining exactly what the Bible teaches. We do not agree on details, but orthodox theologians agree that Christ will return as promised, to render ultimate justice upon the earth. It is certain that we need not fear missing the Second Coming!

DISCUSS:

- *Why is lawlessness a characteristic of rebellion against God?* (True law comes from the very nature of God Himself. The one who places himself in opposition to God must also stand in opposition to true law; etc.)
- *How can focusing on Christ and His return keep us on the right path and prevent us from succumbing to false teaching?*

RESPOND

Use one or more of these **Respond** options to help your group members put into action the principles they learned in this lesson.

OPTION 1: It is important for us to be ready for Christ's return, even if it doesn't happen in our lifetimes. But our preparation must extend beyond ourselves. Every day we are around people who do not know Christ. If we truly believe in the truth of Scripture and we truly believe the gospel is a life-saving message, we need to be sharing that message with others. Ask learners to think of one person they know who needs to know Jesus. Encourage them to write down that name or add it to their notes on their phone. Challenge learners to pray for that person every day this coming week, and to pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with that individual.

OPTION 2: Discuss remaining spiritually awake, alert, and ready for Christ's return. What does that look like? Ask your learners what steps we can take to help us remain alert and ready for Christ's Second Coming. Encourage them to take steps this week to remain ready. AH 8-4 can help with this exercise.

OPTION 3: Discuss ways in which people in our culture have been deceived by false teaching or worldly philosophies. Encourage your learners to use their Bible this week to counter at least one of those false teachings or worldly philosophies.

APPLY:

We need not fear the future because Christ will triumph over evil.



AH 8-4

Encourage your group members to complete the daily devotions in the D6 devotional magazines this week.



PP-8

The *Parent Page (PP-8)* is a resource to help parents discuss the truths of this lesson with their children at home. Give copies of this page to those who will benefit from it and encourage them to use it at home this week. *Parent Page* is also available for FREE download at D6home.com. (No password required.)

Building Blocks

Share these Bible basics with your learners.

Jesus Christ will return to earth. He will take all believers to Heaven and condemn all unbelievers to Hell.

Pray!

Notes

