

Subject: The Silence Ends - Reflections on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Dear Church Family,

This passage offers a message of hope, even in the midst of our greatest sorrows. For those interested in going deeper, we have some great discipleship resources on this passage [[HERE](#)].

Summary: The sermon explored the Christian's hope in the face of death and Christ's promised return. Paul addresses the Thessalonian believers' concerns about those who had died before Christ's return, assuring them that death for the believer is fundamentally different than for the unbeliever. While the world faces death with hopelessness, Christians grieve with hope because we trust in Jesus' resurrection power and His promise to return. The sermon walked through God's call to holiness, brotherly love, and ultimately hope—a hope so powerful it transforms how we live today and how we face tomorrow.

Takeaways:

1. Death is not the end for believers, but a temporary sleep before our glorious reunion with Christ. Our loved ones who have died in Christ are not gone, just relocated to the presence of the Lord until we are all joined together at the rapture.
2. All sorrow is not created equal. While we grieve the loss of relationship and shared life, our sorrow as believers is tempered by the certainty of reunion and the knowledge that our loved ones are where we long to be—with Jesus.
3. The comfort God gives us in our grief is meant to flow through us to others. We are called to be present with those who mourn, to listen actively, to offer prayer, and to remain steadfast in our care—not with clever words, but with genuine love and availability.

As we await Christ's return for His church (the rapture), may our trust in Jesus abound so that our hope may also abound in living out the power of the Gospel. Let us be willing vessels, proclaiming and demonstrating this hope to the countless lives God places in our paths.

In Christ's hope,

Pastor Jim

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The Silence Ends

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

I. Introduction: Faith Brings Power

1. I just love how chapter 4 unfolds. There are many reasons, but if you asked me to point to one, it would be that God is so personally involved in our lives.

We see this in the 3 major movements of the chapter. First up, in verses 1-8, God calls us, His church, to holiness. Then, as we studied last week, He calls us to the “Motto of More”, meaning our purposing to live out more brotherly love. Today, having been called to holiness and brotherly love, God calls us to hope.

2. Trials and suffering can take many forms, but none is quite so clarifying as death. This is because of its sense of finality. Yet, the Gospel of Jesus Christ offers the hope of eternal life...a picture that Paul is offering the Thessalonian church in our passage today.
3. This hope is the working power of God. So powerful is His grace that as believers we can look forward to the reunion to end all reunions.
4. A little story for us...After years of faithfully tilling and sowing with some intermittent success, the farmer walked out onto his fields, thinking of all he had poured into them and simply said, “no more”.

His neighbor asked, “Aren’t you going to plant this year?”

The farmer replied, “What’s the point? Last year failed. The rain didn’t come. The harvest didn’t come. I don’t believe it will this year either.” So he didn’t plant.

Months passed. The rains actually came that year—steady, perfect, life-giving rain. The fields around him turned green and full. But his field? It remained empty.

Not because the rain didn't fall. Not because the soil wasn't good.

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But because **he had no faith in the future—so he had no power in the present.**¹

My prayer for today is that our trust in Jesus abounds that our hope may also abound in our living out the power of the Gospel as a living testimony of our LORD!

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II. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14: While Universal, NOT All Sorrow Related to Death is Equal**

1. 'Say no to ignorance and yes to Jesus' is Paul's opening line of freedom.
2. What seems clear from Paul's letter is that at least some of the Thessalonian saints took Christ's immanent return to heart. They were grieving about those that would miss Him. The result is an unexpected mountaintop of faith found in Jesus that Paul frames up in our passage.
 - A. First up, we note Paul's reference to death of a believer being akin to "falling asleep". This is NOT simply a clever turn of words. Paul's intention is to further the contrast of death of an unbeliever with that of a believer.

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- i. Turn with me to John 11:11-14, NKJV:

¹¹ These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."

¹ Adapted from a ChatGPT story generated by the following prompt: "Give me an Evangelical Christian sermon illustration based on the following quote: "Where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present."" Run on April 27, 2026

¹² Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.” ¹³ However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

¹⁴ Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.

Here, Jesus Himself refers to the Christians’ death as sleep as they grieved over the death of Lazarus before Christ went to the cross of Calvary. **As the story progresses, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.** While this picture clearly illustrates Paul’s pointing the Thessalonians to the temporary nature of death for Christians, it is unfortunate for Lazarus that his resurrection was not to eternal life and he would die again.

- ii. I also want to note that this is NOT, as some suggest, a kind of “soul sleep” where the soul is in an unconscious rest until the final resurrection. **Without ambiguity, 2 Corinthians 5:8 tells us that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.** That is when the Christ-follower dies, we are conscious and in the presence of the Lord – our souls are eternally alive.

B. Up next are two vastly different kinds of sorrow related to death.

- i. The first sorrow is for those with NO experiential knowledge of Jesus. **For them death is hard to the point of being unbearable. It’s cruelty is found in (1) robbing us of relationship, freedom, and dreams, (2) confronting us with having no transcendent, enduring, and meaningful legacy, and (3) its unforgiving and uncaring nature.**

Death is a stake in the ground that says no one is promised tomorrow!

It is, in a word, hopeless. So much so that in **1 Corinthians 15:26**, Paul call’s death “the last enemy”.

- ii. The second is sorrow of death for those calling Jesus LORD. **For you see, death unchecked is the ultimate**

defeat for it is the end of the road of opportunity; the opportunity to instead choose life. This opportunity is the Gospel of Jesus Christ...

The penalty for our sins against God is death. But the Son of God, Jesus Christ, came and paid the penalty for us that any receiving Him as Lord are now destined for eternal life. As Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15**, death has lost its sting, for through His perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ has given us the ultimate victory – life.

Now, this does NOT translate into our NOT having great sorrow when a believer dies – for we grieve for the lost relationship and life we shared. It does mean our sorrow is tempered by knowing we will see them again. Our greatest hope lives on! Our lives/their lives have eternal meaning and value as the continual love and care of our Lord washes over our lives.

Furthermore, those ‘asleep’ are not gone, just relocated to a temporary location until we are all joined together at the rapture. What’s more, we are brought great comfort in knowing they are where we too long to be, in the presence of the Lord.

- A brief note for those wondering how we can arrive at the place that we will know one another in heaven. Consider **Matthew 17**; at the mountain of transfiguration Peter, James, and John knew who Moses and Elijah were. Or, consider **Luke 16:19-31** when Abraham, Lazarus, and the rich man are all recognizable after death. Perhaps **1 Samuel 28:8-17** when Saul recognized a long-since dead Samuel will serve as the exclamation point of this question. Finally, **1 John 3:2** says that in heaven we will see Jesus as He is and we will be like Him...all with glorified bodies able to recognize one another.
- While often a challenge, the Lord blesses us to be His ambassadors in ministering to others in their grief and sorrows. Acute sickness and death often present a challenge regarding what we should say or do.

We want people to know that we care and that we are for them in their sorrow. But we can also be afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing and instead of comfort, we fear we may bring despair.

Christian, trust God. He will give you what to say when you need to say it. Just love the grieving person by making yourself available. They don't need clever words and none of us can "fix" the cause of the sorrows. Be an active listener – both vertically and horizontally. If you are consoling a believer, consider asking for permission to share a scripture God has put on your heart for them. Further, know that whether you are consoling a believer or non-believer, many people welcome prayer when they are grieving so ask and respond accordingly.

One last reminder, be steadfast. While your frequency of contact may become a bit less over time, I encourage you to pick up your phone or drop a card in the mail. It can be very uplifting to know people care!

3. Back in our passage. In v14, we have point 3 of the 4 major points in these opening verses. The beginning "For if" is better translated "For since"...we believe that Jesus died and rose again... Let's stop here for a clarifying moment.

A. While man "falls asleep", Jesus actually died bearing the wrath rightfully due you and me. **Do you believe this...that He died and rose again?** If so, have you confessed your faith to Him?

B. History testifies its true... nonbelievers may NOT believe Jesus is Messiah, but like believers a great many top non-believing scholars and scientists alike believe that this man named Jesus died and rose again. For those interested in pursuing this area of study deeper, Gary Habermas and Michael Licona have written several books presenting the vast tome of evidence regarding the resurrection of Jesus.

i. As Paul notes in **1 Corinthians 15:12-19**, those who believe in Christ are to be pitied if we/they trust in a god to raise us to eternal life if He could not do the same for

Himself. **But Jesus did rise!** And because of His promises, His resurrection unconditionally guarantees the Christian's resurrection.

By the way, I encourage you to go and read all of **1 Cor 15** as it greatly informs our study of 1 Thessalonians 4.

4. The final point in these opening 2 verses is a great Godly promise. This passage has several declaratory "God will" statements and they should all grab our attention. At the end of v14, God is bringing those who "sleep" with Him. This is a great promise for at least three reasons, including (1) the dead in Christ are with Christ, (2) that we will know each other in heaven as it's the same person that died/fell asleep who Christ is returning with, and (3) because it means, as we are about to read, that we will be joined with our new, improved bodies at the time of the rapture.

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III. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: The Rapture

1. These verses are some of the most comforting words in all of Scripture for they speak of God's will, power, and faithfulness in our salvation story.
2. In v17, we read "shall be caught up", which is the Greek word *harpazō*, meaning to be seized or snatched away...folks, this is the rapture. For those contending that the word "rapture" is never used in the Bible and is, therefore, a made up construct, please know that the Latin word for *harpazō* is "raptus" (meaning "a carrying off") which, in turn, is where the English term rapture comes from.
3. Imagine the day the silence ends. All the drama, trials, and suffering are put on notice that the longsuffering Lord has had enough as the wheels of justice come to a rest. Century after century of Satan and his world system making great inroads in corrupting mankind further still are coming to his-and-their climatic end – first in the 7 year tribulation period and last at the end of Christ's millennial reign.

- A. On this day, the voice of the archangel and the sweet song of the trumpet will mix with the sound of opening tombs as the ground gives up its dead along with all the earth's waters and ice flows releasing the bodies held in its clutches. *As these sounds echo across the world, the "sleeping" saints will be fully restored (body and spirit) with Jesus.* What's more, in the flash of the following moment, one generation of Saints will be raptured to their God having never died. *Their stuff, meaningless.* Their jobs, meaningless. *Their plans, meaningless.* Their strategies, meaningless.
- B. In the crowd of people, some will shock us as will those we will surprisingly note are missing...all because God knows our hearts. *People named _____.* Poor people. *Rich people.* Professionals and blue collar workers. *People with different languages, heritages, and body types.* Some of the lame and some in prison cells will also be carried to the Lord in the twinkling of an eye.
- C. In this moment, the church age will come to a close. *Oh, religion will remain...*an increasingly apostate religion that will be instrumental in turning the world to worship the beast. *But the restraining force of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of God's church has been removed.* Unlimited evil will quickly turn into a 7-yr descent in the abyss of evil's eternal abode, hell.
- D. As we process this passage together, it seems clear that Paul is relaying that Jesus wins and evil loses. *Yet, this reality engenders two distinctly different responses, I pray, for each of us:*
- i. First, great Godly sorrow and fear for those that are and will be in the clutches of evil; and
 - ii. Second, a supernatural comfort in the freedom, care, and hope found in Jesus' promise of eternal life with Him.

- iii. As **2 Corinthians 1:3-7** states, may this comfort, freedom, care, and hope God offers us flow through us to those God places in our lives. *May we be willing vessels proclaiming and living out the gospel for His glory and the countless lives He places in our paths.*

[Communion]

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Silence Ends

I. Introduction: Faith Brings Power

- Hope is the working power of God.
- Faith in the future means power in the present.

II. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14: While Universal, NOT All Sorrow is Equal

- Do I actually believe (and live out my life) as though Jesus died and rose again?!
- Live out being ministers of the gospel with others suffering with and from great illness and death.
- May the working power of Christ be evident in our lives.

Additional Scripture References: Jn 11:11-14, 2 Cor 5:8; 1 Cor 15:26; 1 Cor 15; 1 Jn 3:2; 1 Cor 15:12-19

III. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: The Rapture

- Imagine the day the silence ends. I often pray we are that last generation.

Additional Scripture References: 2 Cor 1:3-7

5-Day Devotional

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Silence Ends

Day 1: Called to Holiness

Reading: 1 Thes 4:1-8

Devotional: God's personal involvement in our lives begins with His call to holiness. This isn't a distant demand from an uncaring deity, but an invitation from a loving Father who desires the best for His children. Holiness isn't about perfection through our own strength; it's about allowing God to transform us from the inside out. When we pursue holiness, we're actually pursuing intimacy with God Himself.

Consider today: where is God calling you to surrender more fully to His transforming work? What areas of your life need His sanctifying touch? Remember, His call to holiness is always accompanied by His empowering grace. You're not alone in this journey—the same God who calls you also equips you.

Day 2: The Motto of More

Reading: 1 Thes 4:9-12; 1 Jn 4:7-12

Devotional: Brotherly love isn't optional for Christians—it's the overflow of experiencing God's love ourselves. Paul encourages the Thessalonians to embrace a "Motto of More," constantly growing in their love for one another. This love isn't sentimental or selective; it's sacrificial and intentional. When we love others well, we reflect the character of Christ who loved us to the point of death.

Today, ask yourself: How can I demonstrate "more" love to those around me? Perhaps it's through a phone call, a kind word, practical help, or simply being present. Don't underestimate small acts of love—they're often the most powerful testimony to a watching world that we belong to Jesus. Let God's love flow through you today.

Day 3: Death Has Lost Its Sting

Reading: 1 Cor 15:50-58; 2 Cor 5:1-10

Devotional: For the believer, death is not the end—it's a doorway to eternal presence with Christ. Paul describes it as "falling asleep," emphasizing the temporary nature of physical death and the certain hope of resurrection. While grief is real and appropriate, Christian sorrow differs fundamentally from hopeless despair. We grieve, but not as those without hope. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead guarantees our resurrection. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord—what a comfort!

Today, if you're facing loss or fear of death, anchor yourself in this truth: death is a defeated enemy. Jesus has transformed it from a period into a comma in your eternal story. Live boldly in this hope.

Day 4: The Promise of Reunion**Reading: 1 Thes 4:13-18; Jn 11:17-27**

Devotional: The reunion to end all reunions is coming. Jesus Himself will descend with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God. Those who have fallen asleep in Christ will rise first, then we who remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord. This isn't wishful thinking—it's God's unconditional guarantee. Just as Jesus died and rose again, so He will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. This promise should transform how we live today.

Are you living with eternity in view? Does the certainty of Christ's return shape your priorities, relationships, and decisions? Let this hope anchor you in trials and motivate you in ministry. The silence will end. Jesus is coming.

Day 5: Comfort One Another**Reading: 2 Cor 1:3-7; Ro 12:9-16**

Devotional: Paul concludes this passage with a simple command: "comfort one another with these words." The hope of Christ's return isn't meant to be hoarded—it's meant to be shared. God comforts us so that we can comfort others with the same comfort we've received. When you encounter someone grieving, you don't need perfect words; you need a present heart. Be an active listener. Offer to pray. Share Scripture if appropriate. Simply show up. Your steadfast presence reflects Christ's steadfast love.

Today, consider who in your life needs comfort. Reach out with a call, text, or visit. Don't let fear of saying the wrong thing keep you from showing you care. Trust God to give you what to say. Your faithful presence may be the very comfort God uses to strengthen someone's hope.

Small Group Study Guide

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Silence Ends

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to see and understand His word as you discuss the sermon.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. Death is described as "sleep" for believers - not unconsciousness, but a temporary state before resurrection
2. Believers grieve differently - with sorrow, yes, but not without hope
3. Jesus' resurrection guarantees ours - His victory over death ensures our own
4. The rapture is a certain promise - Christ will return to gather His church
5. Hope should fuel present action - like the farmer illustration, faith in the future empowers us today

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 together. What stands out to you most from this passage? Why?
2. Paul says we should not be "ignorant" about those who have died. What specific truths does he want the Thessalonians (and us) to understand?
3. How does the sermon's illustration of the farmer who stopped planting relate to Christian hope? Have you ever experienced a season where you struggled to have "faith in the future"?
4. Two Types of Sorrow: The sermon contrasts grief without hope versus grief with hope. How have you experienced or witnessed these different types of sorrow? What makes the difference?
5. Paul writes that to be "absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). How does this truth comfort you when thinking about believers who have died?

6. The Rapture: What emotions does the description of the rapture (verses 16-17) stir in you? Excitement? Comfort? Urgency? Fear? Explain.
7. Ministry in Grief: The sermon offers practical advice about comforting those who are grieving. Have you ever struggled with what to say or do when someone is suffering? What guidance from this sermon could help you in the future?
8. The sermon mentions that "their stuff, meaningless. Their jobs, meaningless. Their plans, meaningless" when Christ returns. How should this reality affect:
 - a. How we spend our time?
 - b. What we prioritize?
 - c. How we invest in relationships?
9. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. How can the comfort God gives us in our trials flow through us to others? Can you share a specific example from your life?
10. The sermon states that Jesus' resurrection "unconditionally guarantees the Christian's resurrection." Why is the historical reality of Jesus' resurrection so critical to our faith? (See 1 Corinthians 15:12-19)
11. Paul says this teaching should bring us "comfort" (verse 18). In what current situation do you need to apply this comfort? How might this passage change your perspective?
12. The sermon mentions that after the rapture, "the restraining force of the Holy Spirit in and through God's church has been removed." What responsibility does this place on the church today? How should this affect our evangelism and witness?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. Reach out to someone who is grieving and offer specific support (a call, card, meal, or visit)
2. Memorize 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 as a source of comfort and hope
3. Share the hope of the Gospel with someone who doesn't know Christ
4. Examine my priorities and ask: "Am I living like Jesus could return today?"
5. Pray specifically for unsaved family members or friends, with urgency and hope

6. Write down what I'm most looking forward to about Christ's return and let that fuel my worship
7. Study 1 Corinthians 15 to deepen my understanding of resurrection hope

Closing Prayer Points:

- Comfort for group members or loved ones who are grieving
- Boldness to share the Gospel with those who don't know Christ
- Perspective to live with eternal priorities in view
- Gratitude for the hope we have in Christ's resurrection and return
- Those without hope - name specific people who need to hear about Jesus
- Readiness for Christ's return and the work He has for us until that day

Discussion Questions

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Silence Ends

1. How does understanding death as 'falling asleep' for believers rather than ultimate finality change the way you approach grief when a Christian loved one dies?
2. In what ways does the contrast between hopeless sorrow and hope-filled sorrow challenge or comfort you when facing loss?
3. The sermon compares a farmer who stopped planting because he lost faith in the future to believers who lose hope. What areas of your life might you be 'not planting' because you've lost faith in God's promises?
4. Paul emphasizes that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. How does this truth affect your perspective on your own mortality?
5. How can the church better minister to those who are grieving, both believers who have hope and non-believers who may feel hopeless?
6. The sermon states that God knows our hearts and some who are raptured may surprise us while others we expect may be missing. How does this reality challenge any assumptions you hold about who is truly saved?
7. What does it mean practically for you to live with the awareness that Christ could return at any moment and that your current pursuits may become instantly meaningless?
8. How should the promise of the rapture and the removal of the Holy Spirit's restraining influence motivate our evangelism and urgency in sharing the Gospel?
9. The resurrection of Jesus unconditionally guarantees the Christian's resurrection. How does this guarantee impact your daily trust in God's other promises?
10. In what ways can the comfort you receive from God's promises about eternity flow through you to comfort others facing trials, suffering, or death?

Dinner Conversation Starters

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Silence Ends

1. Hope in the Face of Death

How does believing that death for a Christian is like “falling asleep” change the way we think and talk about death in our family? What scares you most about death, and how does the Bible’s promise of being “present with the Lord” speak to that? Is there someone we’re looking forward to seeing again in heaven?

2. Two Kinds of Sorrow

The sermon talked about sorrow “with hope” and sorrow “without hope.” When have you seen each kind of sorrow in real life (a funeral, a movie, a story)? How can we show people the hope we have in Jesus when they are grieving, without being fake or insensitive?

3. The Reality of the Resurrection

Paul says our hope is grounded in the fact that Jesus really died and rose again. If the resurrection is true, what difference should that make in how we live, plan, and make decisions this week? Are there any doubts or questions about the resurrection that we’ve never really talked about as a family?

4. Living with the Rapture in Mind

The sermon described how, at the rapture, jobs, plans, and possessions suddenly become meaningless compared to being with Jesus. If Jesus were to return this week, what would we suddenly realize didn’t matter as much as we thought? What would we be glad we had done, said, or invested our time in?

5. Ministry in Times of Grief

We were encouraged simply to “be there,” listen, pray, and stay in touch with people who are grieving. As a family, how can we be more intentional about comforting people who are hurting (cards, visits, texts, meals, prayer)? Is there someone specific we can reach out to this week, and what is one practical step we will take?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Silence Ends

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Jesus is With Us When We Are Sad**: When someone dies, or we miss someone, we can tell Jesus how we feel and remember He promises life forever with Him.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) When you feel sad or scared about something, like someone dying, what could you say to Jesus?
 - (b) How does it help to know that people who love Jesus go to be with Him?
 - (c) Is there anyone you want to pray for who is sad right now?
2. **Being Kind to Kids Who Are Hurting**: When someone is sad, we don't have to fix it; we can just be kind, listen, and be a good friend.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) What are some kind things you could do or say to a friend who is crying?
 - (b) What might NOT be helpful to say (even if we mean well)?
 - (c) How can we show Jesus' love to someone who's hurting?
3. **Remembering What Matters More Than Stuff or Screens**: Jesus and people are more important than toys, games, or shows.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) If Jesus came back today, what would be more important: your game/toy, or being with Him and the people you love?
- (b) How can we show that people are more important than screens?
- (c) What is one time this week you could turn off a show or game early to do something kind for someone?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Hope Changes How We Handle Bad News**: Because we believe Jesus died and rose again, we don't have to face bad news (like sickness, death, or scary world events) with panic, but with honest feelings + real hope.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) When you see sad things online or on TV, what do you feel first—fear, anger, confusion?

- (b) What does it mean that for Christians, death is like “falling asleep” and waking up with Jesus?
- (c) How can we respond differently than people who think this life is all there is?

2. **Being a Comforter, Not a “Fixer”**: When friends are hurting, our job is to care, listen, and maybe offer prayer or a kind message—not to give speeches or pretend we know everything.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) If you saw a friend share something sad online or in a group chat, what are three good ways you could respond?
- (b) What are some “unhelpful” responses that might actually hurt them more?
- (c) How could you personally follow up (private message, in-person check-in, prayer)?

3. **Remembering What Will Matter When Jesus Comes Back**: If Jesus could come back at any time, then relationships, character, and faith matter more than popularity, likes, or winning arguments.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) If Jesus came back in the middle of a group chat or a conversation at school, what would you be proud of having said—or embarrassed about?
- (b) Are you ever tempted to join in teasing, gossip, or mean comments so you “fit in”?
- (c) This week, what is one way you can choose to please Jesus instead of trying to impress others (online or in person)?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Living With Real Hope, Not Just “Positive Vibes”**: Our hope isn’t vague optimism; it’s anchored in a real event—Jesus’ death and resurrection—and a real future with Him (the rapture and resurrection).

Discussion Questions:

- (a) How is biblical hope different from just “staying positive” or saying “it’ll be fine”?
- (b) Without Jesus, how might someone look at death or the future?
- (c) How could you respond to a friend’s hopeless post or message in a way that is honest, kind, and points gently toward your hope in Christ?

2. **Showing Up for Hurting Friends (On- and Offline)**: When someone is grieving or struggling, God can use us as His comforters—by being available, listening well, checking in over time, and offering prayer when welcome.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) Beyond a one-line comment or emoji, what are meaningful ways you could support that friend (DM, call, in-person, small gift, prayer)?
 - (b) How can you avoid trying to “explain” their pain and instead really listen?
 - (c) What does it look like to be “steadfast” over weeks and months, not just the first few days?
3. Remembering What Won’t Matter the Moment Jesus Returns: If the rapture really could happen at any time, then a lot of what we obsess over—image, likes, followers, petty drama—will be instantly meaningless. That should shape how we act now.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) If Jesus returned right in the middle of your scrolling, posting, or chatting, what on your phone would you be glad about—and what would suddenly feel really small or even shameful?
- (b) Are there any accounts, group chats, or habits that pull you away from hope, purity, and love instead of toward them?
- (c) What’s one concrete change you could make this week (unfollow, leave a chat, change how you comment/post) that better reflects that your future is with Christ, not in your online reputation?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it’s okay to ask questions, even if things don’t make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Silence Ends

1. Grieving with Hope, Not Despair

Bible Reference: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14 – “...so that you do not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again...”

Application: When facing loss or hearing about death, you can be honest about your grief, but you don’t have to act like life is meaningless. Your hope is anchored in Jesus’ death and resurrection, so even in pain you can point others to real, solid hope.

Scenario: A classmate dies in an accident. At school and online, people post “RIP,” dark memes, or “life is pointless.” Some are spiraling into hopelessness. You’re grieving too, but you know that because Jesus rose, death is not the end for those who are in Him. You don’t pretend it doesn’t hurt, but when you talk or post, you mention the hope of seeing believers again in Christ and that God is near to the brokenhearted.

Discussion: How could you express both real sadness and real hope when your friends are devastated by death or tragedy?

2. Showing Up for the Grieving, Not Just Commenting

Bible Reference: 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 – “...the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those...with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Application: Comforting others isn’t about having the perfect words. It’s about being present, listening, and praying, trusting God to use you as a channel of His comfort.

Scenario: Someone in your youth group loses a parent. Your group chat floods with “praying for you,” but after a few days everyone moves on. Instead of just reacting once, you DM or text: “I’m so sorry. I’m here if you want to talk or just sit in silence.” You ask, “Would it be ok if I prayed for you?” You check in again a week later and again a month later to show you still care.

Discussion: What are some practical, long-term ways you could show comfort and care to someone who has experienced a major loss?

3. Remembering Death Is “Sleep” for Believers

Bible Reference: 2 Corinthians 5:8 – “We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

Application: For those who trust in Jesus, death is not annihilation but being “at home with the Lord.” This changes how you talk about and think about Christian friends and family who’ve died.

Scenario: In a small group, someone says, “I’ll never see my grandparent again; they’re just gone.” You respond gently, “If they knew Jesus, they’re actually with Him right now. We’re apart, but not forever.” When you share your story online or in conversation, you describe their death not as the end but as them going to be with Jesus, and you look forward to the reunion.

Discussion: How does believing that believers who die are “with the Lord” affect the way you think and talk about them?

4. Loving More, Not Just Liking More

Bible Reference: 1 Thessalonians 4:9–10 – “You yourselves have been taught by God to love one another...But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more.”

Application: God calls you not just to “kind of” love people, but to increase in real, sacrificial, brotherly love—especially in your friend groups and church community.

Scenario: *Your friend group has an unspoken “in” and “out” crowd. There’s a quiet person who’s always left out of plans and gets ignored in the group chat. You intentionally invite them to sit with you, add them to hangouts, or ask their opinion in the conversation. Over time you become known as someone who makes space for others instead of closing ranks.*

Discussion: Who is one person on the fringe of your group (school, team, church) that you could intentionally love “more and more” this week?

These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.