

Let's start: Invite God into the meeting. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide your meeting and touch lives.

Worship: Please try and make the effort to engage in worship together.

Discussion: heavenly places

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NIV)

Note that this is only a guide. Please discuss the points you want to discuss.

Acts 1:1–11 (NLT): In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God. Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

- 1. What do people think our bodies will be like in heaven? Why don't people think much about what heaven will be like? What struck you most about this description of Jesus ascension?**

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 (NLT): We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. So encourage each other with these words.

- 2. Why do you think this verse says to encourage one another with these words? How often do we remind each other of this? Why is it important for us to do it more often?**

Philippians 3:20-21 (NLT): But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

- 3. What are you looking forward to most of all about receiving your heavenly body? Why do people tend to think of heaven in a 'fairytale' like manner? What does being a citizen of heaven mean to you? How does this thought or fact affect the way you live now on earth?**

John 14:1-3 (NIV): Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

4. What is the reason God gave us this scripture? Why do we often try to take scriptures like this and think that they are purely metaphorical, and not receive them as actual God-given fact?

Remember: We cannot view our time in eternity as being a fairytale. If we do, we will put far too little effort into how we live here on earth. Heaven is real, and the bodies we will receive in heaven will be real. Let's realise while we are here on earth that God has much for us to do, but that one day we will be with Him for eternity. Let's encourage each other in this actual God-given fact!

WORKS: Let's pray for:

- Continued peace in our nation, and that God's name may be glorified in South Africa
- Any special needs in the group
- Please pray for the eldership and leadership team of the church for 5 minutes