

Lesson Three

How to Live in the End Times

Leader's Guide

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Have you ever considered what your reaction would be if you heard the doctor's words, “You have three months to live”? You could:

- spend time with family
- try to accomplish many lifetime goals as yet unfulfilled
- live in anger that things are out of your control

In a sense, we are living with a similar prognosis. The only differences are that: 1) the time is undefined and, 2) the words are from God – not an earthly physician.

This third lesson builds on the first two. This, you could argue, is the one that counts because it leads you to make changes in your daily life.

We'll take a look at 1 Thessalonians 5 as a short outline for our study.

Prayer

Almighty King, Creator of all things, You alone know the day of Your return. Guide us through Your Word to use each day to glorify Your name. Strengthen our faith through this study and send Your Holy Spirit to be with us. Amen.

Open His Word | 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

Compare and contrast the believers and unbelievers regarding the end times.

- 1) What is similar about believers and unbelievers?
Judgement Day will come suddenly and no one will escape.
- 2) What will be different about believers and unbelievers on the last day?
Believers will not be shocked or scared; unbelievers will experience destruction.

Read verses 4-8

- 1) Paul talks about those who are in the darkness versus those who are in the light. Those in the darkness (unbelievers) are filled with actions like evil and laziness. What are the sons of light and sons of the day (believers) supposed to do?
Be alert and self-controlled, and put on faith and love.
- 2) Christians put on faith and love as a breastplate and wear the hope of salvation as a helmet. Give some reasons why Paul explains the life of a Christian in this way.
We are at war against the powers of evil these Christian attributes are our best defense.

Read verses 9-11

- 1) Verse 9 says that God did not appoint us to suffer. Yet we suffer every day. If that is not God's desire, then why do we have so much suffering?
God did not appoint us to suffer His wrath; there is still earthly suffering due to sin.
- 2) Because our world is filled with pain and so many people are troubled, how can you share the comfort of the Gospel through your life?
Use your gifts to help others; pray for your neighbor; encourage others with the Gospel.

Apply His Word

Quite often in this world, people focus on their own lives and the comforts that they have or don't have. When we focus on ourselves we lose the focus of God's will. As Christians living in the end times, we cannot afford to lose that focus.

Paul gave a wonderful example when he wrote about the day and the night. It is now day for Christians. Consider how you use this time to share your faith in words and actions.

Place a check mark before each of the statements that show ways to share your faith with others:

1. Give glory to God for the blessings in your life.
2. Accept the negative things in your life without complaining.
3. Trust in God when life is going good, but become negative when things go bad.
4. Spend time with loved ones who are disabled, shut-in, or institutionalized.
5. Show love to the elderly by ending their lives and putting them out of their misery.
6. Let people know how tough your life is and how you manage to endure in spite of all the pain.
7. Study God's Word daily for strength, comfort, and direction in your life.
8. Pray for people who are hospitalized, in nursing homes, or suffering with pain and loneliness in their sunset years.
9. Evaluate people's quality of life in determining whether they should continue living.
10. Rank people into two categories: those worth helping and those not worth your effort.

Check: *(1) Give glory to God for all things in your life; (2) Sometimes the strongest witness occurs during trials; (4) your actions will speak loudly as a wonderful witness for others; (7) God's Word is your best tool and should be used daily; (8) remembering these people in your prayers should never be underestimated.*

Don't Check: *(3) Consider Job and his attitude; (5) although "mercy killing" sounds compassionate, you are taking an action that only belongs to God (even when it doesn't make sense to you); (6) people usually see your suffering without you telling about it; (9) this is commonly done by people today, but God doesn't evaluate your worth based on a subjective "quality"; (10) your role is not to evaluate or rank, but rather to show love and support; everyone needs your help even if you don't recognize it on the outside.*

Conclusions from His Word

Our time on earth is limited, and a great deal needs to be done. These past three weeks involved the study of God's Word as it applies to end-of-life issues. Just like our own lives, the world has a certain amount of time that God has ordained before it comes to an end. Rather than complain about the problems or blaming God for the suffering, use those opportunities to praise Him and lead others to a saving faith in their Savior. Remember that our suffering or unique situation just might be the situation that God gives us to reach others with the Gospel.