



Living in the Middle 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:11

Community Reflection is part three of Vineyard Boise's "Weekly Discipleship Track." Community Reflection is intended to point you towards the unique interaction that happens in the face to face setting of small group life. You've processed the truth on your own in the weekly devotions and have heard the truth presented in Sunday's teaching. Now you have the opportunity to interact with other believers about the implications and applications of that truth. "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another," says the proverb. That's exactly what takes place in the small group setting. Perspectives are clarified, truths explored, convictions sharpened (or softened, as the case may be), life is built. There are three segments in each Community Reflection: **Prepare, Process, and Participate.**



PREPARE

(For leaders/co-leaders prior to group meeting)

1. Work through "This Week's Walk." Do the devotions, noting any key insights you want to share with your group or questions you would like to ask.

2. Just a portion of Matthew 24 and 1 Corinthians 15 are given in the devotional. In addition to several readings of the main text of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:11, you might consider reading all of Matthew 24 (and perhaps also read through the parallel passages in Mark 13 and Luke 21) and all of 1 Corinthians 15. You also might want to "bone up" on some key terms that will come up when believers start talking about the end times:

Millenium – literally a period of 1,000 years; specifically the 1,000 year reign of Christ mentioned in Revelation chapter 20. How you interpret Revelation 20 and how you relate the millenium to Christ's return will determine whether you are *premillennial* (a literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth which is preceded by the second coming), *postmillennial* (a figurative reign of Christ on earth which is followed by the second coming), or *amillennial* (there is no literal 1,000 year reign of Christ – it's just symbolic of Christ's victory over his enemies). Finally, let's not overlook the *panmillennialist* – this is one who believes it will all "pan out" in the end!

Rapture – a secret coming of Jesus just for the church (believers just vanish leaving the world in shock).

Tribulation – a seven year period of intense worldwide suffering which is believed to take place immediately before the second coming. You are a *pretribulational premillennialist* if you believe the rapture will take place before the tribulation which precedes the 1000 reign of Jesus following his second coming; you are *mid-tribulational premillennialist* if you believe the rapture will happen during the tribulation; you are a *post-tribulational premillennialist* if you believe the rapture will happen after the tribulation, prior to the visible second coming and the ensuing millennial reign of Jesus on earth (that whole *panmillennial* thing is sounding better all the time!).

The Beast/Antichrist/Man of Sin/666 – an arch evil political leader that many believe will arise just before the return of Jesus. It is believed that he will be the cause of the tribulation and will finally be eliminated at the second coming of Jesus. Potential references are Revelation 13 and 2 Thessalonians 2.

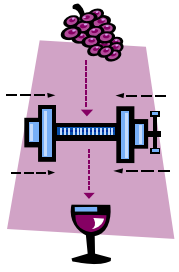
3. Pray daily over your upcoming meeting and for each person in your group.

Weekly Discipleship Track



1. Life reflection – need for change, hunger for God
2. Presentation of truth – teaching and studying
3. Processing the truth – reflection and debrief in community
4. Life change – response to truth, new habits and actions

Community Reflection



PROCESS

(For leaders/co-leaders during group meeting)

1. Ask your group how they did with their devotions this past week. What stood out as they worked through them? What questions or issues were raised?
2. Read through **1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11**, then choose one of the following tracks as a point of focus for the group:

Track One *No one knows the day or the hour*

Warning: No matter which track you pick, this study and discussion may uncork some folks in your group! However the discussion develops, avoid strife-filled nitpicking over end times details, theories and doctrines, and keep moving the group towards the bottom line application in each of the passages in the devotional – comfort, encouragement, holy living, steadfastness, and faithfulness in our stewardship.

This track involves a primary focus on the text in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11** (though you may want to supplement with references from other scriptures). Help get the group hip deep in processing Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonian church!

Discussion starters:

- Why do people get so worked up over the second coming – why so much controversy?
- What do you think it means, practically speaking, to be ready for Christ's return if we don't even know when he's coming? How does knowing he's coming impact your daily life?
- "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night..." Does this calm or stir up your fears? Why?
- In what practical ways can you "put on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet"? What does this say about the much needed, primary application of teaching on the end times? How deeply are these three cardinal virtues imbedded in your daily life?

Track Two *Millennial Forum*

If you perceive that your group would really benefit from an exploration of the differing views within the field of eschatology (*premillennialism, postmillennialism, etc*), read the passage in 1 Thessalonians, then launch a loving but frank discussion – a "millennial forum" – about these different views. Summarize them, ask the members of your group to share which they tend to believe and most importantly in what ways that belief has impacted their lives. Encourage an atmosphere of acceptance, understanding and support for one another. Addressing some of the controversy head on can be risky, but it could be a very profitable "iron sharpening iron" experience for the group.



PARTICIPATE (As a group during or after your meeting)

Have a movie night. Watch an end times movie like *Left Behind* and discuss it as a group. What do you think was accurate? Where did it miss it? How did the film

Community Reflection

impact you? Again, encourage the group to avoid being critical and to always show respect for others and their sincerely held beliefs.