

## LifeGroup Discussion Questions

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, 1 Corinthians 15:50-55

August 2, 2020

### **Overview:**

Are you living in such a way that you want to meet Jesus? Is there something you would want to change or do differently? The answers to these questions probably change daily. As I was growing up I went to Sunday school every week. On the wall in the classroom we had a map of the world that we used push pins to mark all the world calamities. This included everything from earthquakes to famines to tornados. During this time, we thought, as events in the world got worse, we were getting closer to the rapture. The rapture is when all believers on earth will be taken to Heaven. We focused more on the when of the rapture than the preparedness of our hearts for the rapture.

For many of us the concept of the rapture is not something we think about regularly. Maybe most of your information on the rapture might come from the popular Tim Lahaye *Left Behind* series. This was immensely popular during the mid to late 90s. As the title to the series states some people were left behind and not taken to heaven. The believers who were taken left their clothes in neatly folded piles marking the place where they were last. It was in this series you could watch Kirk Cameron battle it out with the anti-Christ. This single series dealing with the rapture became somewhat polarizing among believers. To some it brought hope and assurance and to others it brought fear. Many during this time allowed this book series to formulate their picture of the rapture. I would highly recommend not letting a fictional book be the basis for your theology on the rapture.

I believe both my Sunday school class and the *Left Behind* series missed the point. The point is not to determine when the rapture will happen or to try to get on rapture 2.0 (Left Behind Series) if you were left behind the first time. The point is to always live in a state of readiness. For some of us we want the glory of heaven, but just not quite yet. We are still enjoying the comforts of earth. We do not live as exiles (1 Peter), we live as if earth is our permanent home. We have become so entrenched with the things of this world we are indistinguishable. The only thing that separates some us from the things of this world is that we attend church on Sunday.

There is a danger in the understanding of readiness. Being ready does not mean being caught up in religious activities. Church activities are great and have their place, but they in no way gauge your heart. Matthew 7:21-23 states: <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to

me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'<sup>[1]</sup> This is quite the list of religious activities Jesus is giving. If you are prophesying, casting out demons, and doing other mighty works in Jesus' name then you would be considered a very engaged church member. Jesus is listing varsity level Christian activities, and yet He states He never knew them.

I will try to illustrate Jesus' point. Let's say there is a very hard working man named Joe. He has three kids and has been married for ten years. Joe is an amazing employee. He rarely misses a day and excels at his job. His family has always been well taken care of. There has not been a day in the ten years of marriage where Joe's family has been in need. The issue is that during this period of time has Joe never expressed any love for his family. Not a single hug or an "I love you." Nothing expressed from his heart toward his wife or kids. Here is the question: Has Joe fulfilled his duties as a husband and father? He provided, protected, and devoted his life to them, but he missed the point. All these activities without love are just hollow actions. You could replace Joe with a well programmed robot and get the same results.

How many of us get caught up in doing religious activities and have missed the relationship? God wants our hearts, not just ritual-fulfilling believers. This is what will separate those who know about Jesus from those who know Jesus on the day of rapture. Have you regulated your Christian life to a Sunday Morning service? Do you have a deep yearning and desire to know God more and more each day? The rapture is coming. It is our job to be ready which means having a deep, abiding relationship with Jesus.

### **Bible Study:**

1. What comes to your mind when you think about the rapture?
2. In what ways can you deepen your relationship with Jesus?
3. What is the difference between religious activities and a relationship with Jesus?
4. Why do you think some believers want to go to heaven, but just not yet?
5. Discuss how you think you will feel seeing Jesus for the first time.
6. Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-55. What do you think your new heavenly body will be like?
7. Are you looking forward to the rapture? Why or why not?