Facilitator:

1. Open with Prayer

2. Welcome any newcomers

3. Try to keep your discussion to an hour and a half at the most.

**Facilitator**: Encourage your members to **BRING THEIR BIBLES** and use them during Connect Group.

**CONNECT Group study questions for April 16, 2017**

**Title: Life After Death**—1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

**Read**: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord,that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*

*Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

 *Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers,you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.*

**Question**: Pastor Peppy identified the two pillars of the Christian Faith: The belief that Jesus Christ died, and the belief that Jesus Christ rose again.

 What did Jesus’ death and resurrection from the grave accomplish? Why is it important to believe (trust, rely) in the reality (that it really happened) of Jesus’ death and resurrection? Because Jesus died and rose again, what are the implications for us who believe it? **Facilitator**: Many of us who have been believers a long time risk taking this “great salvation” (Hebrews 2:3) for less than it is.

**Read and Discuss**: John 11:25-26 and Galatians 2:20.

**Question**: Pastor Peppy outlined the three events (1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17) that will occur either simultaneously or in quick succession at the rapture: 1. The Lord Jesus will shout, 2. the archangel will dispense orders to our guardian angels, and 3. and at the sound of the trumpet of God the dead in Christ will rise with those who are alive to join them in the clouds to meet the Lord.

 Discuss the sequence as Pastor Peppy unfolded it, especially the application of Psalm 91:11.

**Read**: Matthew 25:1-13

**Question**: With no time to get ready once the trumpet sounds, how should we conduct ourselves from day to day? How should we order our priorities now to meet the Lord when he calls us. **Facilitator**: Bible scholars differ about the meaning of Matthew 25:1-13, but the parable’s central message is clear: Be ready.

**Read**: 2 Corinthians 5:6-8

*So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

**Question**: One of the great mysteries of life is death and what happens when we die.

 Compare this passage with our text. What happens to a believer in Jesus Christ when he dies? Do these passages conflict with each other or complement each other?

**Read**: Acts 7:54-60

 *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep*.

**Question**: What additional information does this passage teach us about what happens to a person who dies as a believer in Jesus Christ? What about Stephen seeing the Lord as he was dying? Do you think this is an experience unique to Stephen?