**Learn in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**What does the Bible say about the future?**

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” ([1 Corinthians 2:9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co2.9))

*Our society is obsessed with the future. Movies often feature a dystopian future where humankind is fighting machines or each other. Countless articles and podcasts attempt to predict where the economy is headed or which technological advances will change our lives. Sports journalists are paid to predict the outcome of games. Predictions about the presidential election fill headlines every four years. Many people read and dissect their horoscopes—all in an effort to know the future.*

*But what does the Bible say about the future? While it was written thousands of years ago and much of its contents has already taken place, we do get a glimpse of the future in the Bible. We know there is life beyond this life. We know the brokenness and pain in this world will not last forever. We know God will make all things new, and He will right every wrong. In renowned author J.R.R. Tolkien’s book,* The Return of the King*, Samwise Gamgee asked Gandalf, “Is everything sad going to come untrue?” The Bible answers that question with a resounding* yes!

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| First time leading Learn for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**What are some thoughts and images that come to mind when you think of the end times? |

Every major religion has something to say about the end times. Almost all of them agree that things will get worse, but the Bible also focuses on the end with great hope. Jesus compares the end of all things to labor pains; the kind of pain that has a promise attached to it—hurt that has hope mixed with it. Jesus will come again as Judge and King. He will come the same way He left—through the air and triumphant. When He comes back we will be with Him forever. This is our Blessed Hope.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your response to this question: Do you think Jesus will return in your lifetime? Why or why not?



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| **QUESTION**Do you think Jesus will return in your lifetime? Why or why not? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

Today we’ll read Jesus’ warnings to His disciples about the end times. In the last days, many will claim to know the day of the coming of the Lord. Jesus tells us not to fall for these claims. Only God the Father knows when Jesus will come back.

Jesus compared His second coming to the time of Noah. The Bible says God was sorry He had created humankind because of their evil thoughts and actions ([Genesis 6:6](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge6.6)). Then one day, the rain came. The time for repentance was over, and judgment was at the door. Noah had readied the ark, and he and his family survived the flood. We, too, need to watch and be ready, staying faithful to God as Noah did.

**We Don’t Know When Jesus Will Return**

Read [Matthew 24:42–44](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt24.42-44).

When Jesus returns, He will come as a thief without warning. Those who are spiritually awake will be prepared for His coming. Those who are distracted or living their own way will not be ready. It’s important for us not only to be ready, but to watch and wait for the day Jesus returns.

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| **QUESTION**How might the mystery of when Jesus will return impact people’s behavior and beliefs? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some practical ways we can protect ourself spiritually from anything that would distract us from being ready for Jesus’ return? |

**We Should Remain Faithful until Jesus Returns**

Read [Matthew 24:45–47](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt24.45-47).

Jesus requires faithfulness while we wait for His return. Our faithfulness may not just involve personal devotion. It sometimes also involves caring for others and helping them in their walk with God. He is looking to reward those who are faithful.

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| **QUESTION**What is the risk of putting others in charge of the things that are important to you? What are the rewards when it is done well? |

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think God chose to work through others and take the risk of us following through or not? |

**Our Life Should Show That We Expect Jesus to Return**

Read [Matthew 24:48–51](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt24.48-51).

Living with anticipation of Jesus’ return will help us live a godly life. If we think Jesus’ return is in the distant future, we might not act with urgency to share the gospel. We might delay our daily obedience to God. Then when Jesus comes, we will find that we are out of time to correct our behavior.

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| **QUESTION**Many people believe that they can sin now and repent later. What would you like to say to someone who thinks that? |

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| **QUESTION**Taking care of others is part of our faithfulness to God. How does this idea impact the way you wait for Jesus to return? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *Banditry was a common reality of the ancient world, as policing was relatively nonexistent in the way we are familiar with. Although protection from local military was available, it was usually only reserved for the wealthy and for citizens of the Roman Empire. As a result, an individual’s most important property, such as livestock and metal tools, would often be kept inside the owner’s house at night rather than in an exterior barn, so he could watch over his valuables and protect them when they were most vulnerable.* |

**Reflect**

**Jesus Is Coming Back**

We cannot simply think of the return of Jesus as an event in the distant future. We must be ready for His coming any day. Our belief about when He will return will help us stay faithful or will distract us toward unfaithfulness. The worries and temptations of life, the diversions of media, and even the pursuit of ambition can make us forget that we are waiting for something of eternal significance.

But waiting requires watchfulness. God is looking for faithful people who will run their race well while they help others run alongside them toward God. We have a greater capacity to stay faithful to Jesus when we keep watch in the company of others who are waiting with us. So, we wait with hope together for the day of His coming.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**In your daily walk, is it easy or hard for you to be faithful to God? What makes that so? |

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| **QUESTION**Consider your gifts. Knowing that Jesus expects our faithfulness to include helping others, what can you do to use your gifts to help others stay faithful to God? |

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| **QUESTION**Do you have areas in your life where you have intentionally or unintentionally wandered from faithfulness? Take a moment to repent and ask for God’s forgiveness. What can you do to return wholeheartedly to God? |

**Activate**

Jesus’ return will not happen until all nations know the good news ([Matthew 24:14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt24.14)). Part of our faithfulness in helping others follow God can include our faithfulness in partnering with those who take the gospel to other nations. Some pray, some give, and some go, but every Christian has a part in letting the whole world know Jesus will return.

**Challenge**

Prayerfully consider what you might need to do to partner in sending the gospel out to the world. Choose the one you feel impressed to do more of going forward: Pray, give, or go.

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| **QUESTION**What is your next step in following through with this commitment? Share this with someone in your group to encourage one another. |

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and remember to pray for them during the week. |

Before next time, continue to spend time in God’s Word with the personal devotions.

**What We Believe**

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| **Official Doctrine**All Christians who have died will one day rise from the grave and will meet the Lord in the air. Christians who have not yet died will be raptured or caught up with them, to be with the Lord. Then Christians of all ages will live with God forever. The scriptural truth of the Lord’s soon return is “the Blessed Hope” ([Romans 8:23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro8.23); [1 Corinthians 15:51–52](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co15.51-52); [1 Thessalonians 4:16–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Th4.16-17); [Titus 2:13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Tt2.13)).**The Significance of This Doctrine**This doctrine is very important because it provides a primary motivation for witnessing and living a holy life. For the believer, the return of Christ for His redeemed is a blessed hope indeed! The translation or “snatching away” of living Christians, commonly called the Rapture (“to catch up”), will bring an end to suffering, pain, hardship, and difficulty. We, as Christians, will then be with the Lord forever. Though the body is not alive between death and resurrection, the soul does not sleep but is consciously alive in the presence of the Lord ([2 Corinthians 5:8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Co5.8)).For the sinner, however, the Rapture is anything but a blessed hope. To be left behind will involve indescribable suffering as God judges a rebellious and disobedient world. God desires that all people should ask forgiveness and be restored to fellowship with Him. He places this burden for the lost and their waiting eternal punishment on the hearts of those who already know His love and salvation. It is for this reason that the primary mission of the Church is evangelizing the world, seeking for as many as possible to be saved from the judgment to come. |

**Learn on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: Jesus Is Coming Back**

Read [Matthew 24:42–51](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt24.42-51).

Look back over Learn in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture, too.

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| **QUESTION**What is God saying to you about the return of Jesus? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 2: Jesus Is Not Delaying His Promised Coming**

Read [2 Peter 3:3–10](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Pe3.3-10).

Jesus ascended to heaven about two thousand years ago after promising He would return. It’s only normal to wonder why He hasn’t returned yet, especially when He told us to wait with urgency. These verses give us a glimpse into why Jesus is waiting to return to us.

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| **QUESTION**What are some reasons God might be patiently delaying Jesus’ return (verse [9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Pe3.9))? |

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| **QUESTION**If this is the reason God is delaying Jesus’ coming again, what can we do to partner with God while He is being patient? |

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| **QUESTION**How does verse [10](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Pe3.10) describe the Day of the Lord? Which part of that motivates you most to make sure those you love are ready? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 3: Many Will Claim to Be the Christ**

Read [Matthew 24:1–14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt24.1-14).

Jesus told of a time when false prophets and false messiahs would appear. He warned of war, famine, persecution, and natural disasters. Jesus said these events would be just the beginning of much more before the end of the age. Even now, we must stay watchful to know the real from the counterfeit, so we can stay faithful to the true Christ. Because of an abundance of counterfeits to the truth, real danger of falling away from the faith exists in the last days.

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| **QUESTION**Reading the list of things Jesus warned about, do you think we are in the last days? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**With the threat of false messiahs, rumors, and false doctrines, how can we keep ourself from falling for the counterfeits? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 4: Those Who Died in the Faith Will Rise Again**

Read [1 Thessalonians 4:13–18](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Th4.13-18).

Just as Jesus rose from the dead, those who die believing in Him will rise again. Jesus will descend from the heavens with a shout and those who have died will be caught up with Him in the clouds. Those of us who are alive will join them and will live with Jesus forever. As terrible as the end of days will be, the hope of living with Jesus forever comforts us. This hope of eternal life with Jesus is the believer’s inheritance in God.

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| **QUESTION**Have you lost a Christian loved one? Does it help to know that one day you will see that one again because of Jesus? |

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| **QUESTION**Do you have a non-Christian loved one? Does this person know that eternal life is set aside for believers alone? What can you do to lovingly tell your loved one about the life available in Jesus? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 5: We Will Be Transformed When Jesus Comes**

Read [1 Corinthians 15:50–58](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co15.50-58).

Although many benefits come to us as we age, universally our body weakens and becomes more prone to pain and disease. When Jesus returns, we will be transformed in an instant. Our perishing body will be changed to an imperishable one. Death will be swallowed up, and immortality will become our reality.

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| **QUESTION**Can you imagine having an imperishable body? What part of this transformational experience are you looking forward to the most? |

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| **QUESTION**The reward of staying faithful is immense. But only those people who stay faithful to the end receive the reward. What are some things you can take from these Scriptures to help you stay faithful on the hard days of life? |