**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 life. 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**If you could design and build your own dream home, with no limit on cost or supplies, what kind of house would you build and where would you build it? |

We can find as many answers to this question as we can find people. Some of us would choose a bungalow on a gorgeous beach or a cedar cabin on a snowy mountain. Others would choose a high-rise penthouse suite overlooking a huge city. God made each of us with such different tastes and preferences. So it’s interesting to remember that Jesus said that God’s house has many rooms and that He’s gone back to heaven to make a place for each of us.

Some people would accuse Christians of believing in fairy tales. After all, an amazing home in heaven sounds too good to be true, right? But it *is* true. And that means how we live now is vitally important. People all over the world are living as though the future doesn’t matter, as though nothing exists but here and now. They aren’t spending any time thinking about God or His desires. However, Jesus teaches us to live wisely and to be ready for His return.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your response to this question: How frequently do you think about Jesus’ return? Daily? Weekly? Or less often?



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| **QUESTION**How frequently do you think about Jesus’ return? Daily? Weekly? Or less often? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

Jesus is returning soon. This was true for the earliest believers in the Church, and even more true now. We are living in the age of God’s great patience. He wants every person around the world to have the chance to hear about Him and accept Him ([2 Peter 3:9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Pe3.9)). He is allowing time for all of us to tell everyone the good news of Jesus. The same Bible that proved so accurate about Jesus’ first coming also has a lot to say about His second coming. We know that He is soon to return; what we do today really matters.

We all like to know exactly when things are going to happen. If we are invited to a meeting for work, we want the time and place on our calendar days in advance. If we are invited to a family reunion, we want to know the time and place early so we can make travel plans.

However, no one but God the Father knows exactly when Jesus will return. Because of this, many will put off being ready. People will be lulled into complacency because the wait is so long. We must do all we can to live in such a way that we look forward to Jesus’ return. We must make both living for Jesus and finishing strong our priority.

**Finishing Strong Requires Preparation**

Read [Matthew 25:1–4](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.1-4).

When a train is scheduled to leave the station, everyone who has bought a ticket has full access. A seat is reserved and waiting for that passenger. Most passengers carefully pack a bag, leave home in plenty of time, and make all the necessary preparations for the journey. For those of us anticipating Jesus’ return, preparation is much the same, except we don’t know the time of departure. God is patiently waiting, so that all who will prepare have an opportunity to get ready.

Like the bridesmaids, living in a state of constant readiness can be challenging at times. Years pass slowly, and life’s troubles and concerns make it difficult to remember the sure coming of the journey. Having a close relationship with Jesus and with other people who love Jesus keeps the anticipation of His return at the forefront of life. When our life has Jesus at the center, we can keep the reality of eternity in focus.

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| **QUESTION**Would you consider yourself to be a planner or a procrastinator? |

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| **QUESTION**What do you look forward to most about heaven? |

**Finishing Strong Requires Devotion**

Read [Matthew 25:5–9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.5-9).

Only a foolish person would come to the starting line of a marathon without much planning, sacrifice, and work. And it’s not enough to start training well. Athletes must discipline themselves to do the work when no one is watching and when the initial motivation has waned.

Our life as a Christian is the same as this passage suggests. We cannot expect to finish the race of life with any strength if we do not put thought and effort into the daily habits that impact our faith. A life of regular devotion to the Bible, prayer, worship, mission, and gathering with other believers is a sure way to keep faith strong until Jesus returns.

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| **QUESTION**What are a few habits in your life that help to keep your faith in God strong? |

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| **QUESTION**What is something you could incorporate into your life to help strengthen your faith? |

**Finishing Strong Requires Endurance**

Read [Matthew 25:10–13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.10-13).

Many people thought Noah was foolish to build a huge boat. Then one day, the heavy rains began ([Genesis 7:10–16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge7.10-16)). In the same way, many people may think that God’s great patience means that Jesus is never actually coming. But one day, He surely will just as this story about the bridesmaids suggests. And we are all responsible to be ready when the day does come.

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| **QUESTION**How does the story of the wise and foolish bridesmaids challenge you? |

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| **QUESTION**Who are some people God is putting on your heart who need to hear or be reminded of the good news? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *Oil lamps are one of the most commonly found artifacts from the ancient world in archeological digs, as they were commonly used in both private homes and public places. The study of oil lamps allows us a window into the life of those who used and owned them in biblical times. For example, it is common to find small depictions of menorahs on lamps that belonged to Jews, or gladiators and soldiers on Gentile Roman-owned lamps. Often by studying lamps as they are pulled out of the ground, archaeologists can identify not only the background of those who lived at a specific location, but also gain some insight into their everyday life.* |

**Reflect**

**Jesus Wants Me to Finish Strong**

Every person has been created by God for a relationship with Him. Because of Jesus, we can have a wonderfully abundant life here on earth. We can also look forward to eternity in the presence of God. The problem is that it’s so easy to become distracted by the cares and concerns of this world. Relationships, work, school, community responsibilities, and so many other things are vying for our attention and devotion. All these things are good, but none of them can take the place of a thriving relationship with Jesus in our life.

One day it will be too late to make changes or further preparations. One day, Jesus will return. It will be a great day of joy for many, and one of great sorrow for others. In his book, *God in the Dock*, C.S. Lewis said, “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.” If we believe what Jesus said, we can’t be half-hearted about it. We must make sure our life reflects what we believe. Now is the time for each of us to be ready to spend forever with Jesus.

**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**How does your life reflect the truth that Jesus is coming soon? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some things distracting you from thinking about eternity and heaven? |

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| **QUESTION**If you somehow knew Jesus were returning next month, how would that change your life? |

**Activate**

It’s thrilling to know Jesus is coming someday, and that heaven will be more amazing than anyone can imagine. At the same time, it’s sobering to realize that so many people still do not know about Jesus or about the hope of heaven. Sharing our faith is an important part of staying ready for Jesus’ return. Keeping focused on eternity, for ourself and for others, helps us not get distracted by the cares and concerns of the world.

**Challenge**

This week, let God remind you of some people in your life who need to hear the good news of Jesus. Share about what God has done in your heart and life with at least two people. Making a practice of sharing what God is doing can open up many encouraging conversations about eternity and help us to keep our eyes on Jesus.

**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 learn 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 Wants Me to Finish Strong**

Read [Matthew 25:1–13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.1-13).

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 me about all the wonderful things that He is preparing for believers? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 2: We Can Stay Ready by Having a Strong Devotional Life**

Read [Psalm 119:47–48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps119.47-48).

King David, the writer of these verses, is a good example of someone with a strong devotional life. He was called “a man after [God’s] own heart” ([Acts 13:22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac13.22)). We find evidence of David’s devotion to God throughout the Book of Psalms. A practical path to a life of devotion is to start meditating on God’s Word.

Throughout church history, a devotional life has been an important part of living for so many believers. It means real study of the Bible and thinking deeply about the things of God. It means developing a significant habit of prayer. It means not cluttering our mind with things that do not bring us closer to God. A devotional life is much more than just thinking about God once a week at church. We can do things every day that will keep our mind on Him. Building in time for devotions each day helps us to love Jesus more and be ready for His return.

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| **QUESTION**How is God challenging you to love Him with your mind? |

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| **QUESTION**What is something that might be cluttering your mind and keeping you from thinking about God more? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 3: We Can Stay Ready by Having Strong Relationships**

Read [Acts 2:42–47](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac2.42-47).

The early Christians did not have any books or conferences to teach them how to live as Christians. The Holy Spirit filled them and led them. God enabled them to love and help each other right away. In the wild, often the animal that wanders away and becomes isolated is the one that is attacked and killed by the predator. In the same way, believers who allow themselves to become isolated are the ones more likely to be successfully targeted by the enemy. We can stay strong when we encourage one another and remind one another of the truth we know. When we spend time with other believers regularly, our faith is strengthened and sharpened ([Proverbs 27:17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Pr27.17)). Strong relationships with other believers will help us stay ready for Jesus’ return.

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| **QUESTION**How did the early Christians spend time together? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some practical ways for you to spend more time with other believers throughout the week? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 4: We Can Stay Ready by Accepting Real Responsibility**

Read [Luke 10:1–16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk10.1-16).

When Jesus was here on earth, He put His followers to work. They went out to share the good news of the Kingdom with everyone they encountered. Though many years have passed, Jesus still wants His people to take responsibility to help other people know Him. Caring for the spiritual health of others is not just the pastor’s job. It’s the work of every Christian in some form. We must not fall into the idea that we should keep our faith to ourself. Many people will never hear about Jesus if we do not tell them. And many people will never grow as a Christian without someone to help them. We might all have different talents and careers, but we can all help others know how to walk with God. Accepting Kingdom responsibility for people around us will help us stay strong and ready for Jesus’ return.

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| **QUESTION**What were some of the things Jesus told His followers to do as they went out? |

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| **QUESTION**How is Jesus challenging you to take responsibility for someone else’s spiritual health? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 5: We Can Stay Ready by Surrendering to Jesus**

Read [John 3:1–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn3.1-17).

The Bible is very clear that anyone who believes in Jesus will not die, but will live forever with God. It’s not enough to just agree that God is real ([James 2:19](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jas2.19)). We must surrender to Him. We must be born again. This means turning over our life and our will to Jesus. This means letting Him be both Savior and Lord of our life—not just for a moment, but regularly. Staying ready for Jesus’ return means living a life surrendered to Him. It means obeying what the Bible teaches and striving to love and serve God. The first step in being ready for Jesus to come back is to give our heart to Him.

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| **QUESTION**What might hold a person back from fully surrendering to God? |

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| **QUESTION**Examine your own life. If Jesus were to return today, would you be ready? |