**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**  What are some behaviors young children are often rewarded for while growing up? |

We love to receive rewards. Some people might even try to reduce the Christian life to being all about rewards and punishment, but that would be a mistake. If we do, we run the risk of passing over a vital point. The Christian life is really about faith in Jesus to restore a right relationship with God. Right behaviors are simply an outflow of our genuine faith.

We don’t do righteous things to receive rewards. That’s not how God’s kingdom works. We don’t earn our way into salvation; neither do we earn our way into keeping salvation once we receive it. But because our faith is real, we should be compelled to do what Jesus did. And Jesus lived with incredible compassion and grace for those on the margins of society. We must do the same.

It’s worth emphasizing that the reward we receive is not just experiencing Jesus’ presence in eternal life. We are rewarded by how we enjoy His presence here and now as we do the work of His kingdom—sharing His love with those in need.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: Do you regularly think about how your life now has heavenly rewards? Why do you think that is?



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| **QUESTION**  Do you regularly think about how your life now has heavenly rewards? Why do you think that is? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

The passage of Scripture we’re about to read is best known as the story of the Sheep and the Goats. As members of a farming society, Jesus’ listeners knew these animals were often pastured together. If a farmer needed only one kind of animal, like at sheep-shearing time for example, he would separate them into two groups. It’s a metaphor everyone in Jesus’ day would have immediately understood.

You see, religious leaders were battling about who were the true people of God. Each religious group had its own ideas. So Jesus explained His viewpoint. He made it clear that those who are truly God’s are those who belong to Him and live their life as He did. Jesus placed himself at the center of the identity of God’s true people.

**Jesus Will Judge Our Faithfulness to Him**

Read [Matthew 25:31–33](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.31-33).

Jesus will gloriously return one day and will judge the world. Every person will be subject to His judgment. He will separate the righteous from the unrighteous. Those who faithfully belong to Jesus will be ushered into eternal reward. Those who do not belong to Him will be separated from Him forever.

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| **QUESTION**  As you think about Jesus’ eventual return, how does it make you feel? |

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| **QUESTION**  What does this story concerning the future tell us about how we should live our life now? |

**Jesus Will Reward Those Who Follow Him**

Read [Matthew 25:34–40](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.34-40).

We often talk about what it means to follow Jesus and the behaviors that accompany genuine faith. But do we focus on the same priorities as Jesus did? Many behaviors, like prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, and small group participation get a lot of airtime when we talk about how Christians should live. Those things are essential to building our faith. But in this parable when Jesus spoke of judging our life and rewarding how we have lived out our faith, He spoke about only *one thing*—how we treated those who were in need.

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| **QUESTION**  Jesus said that if we care for those who are suffering, it’s as though we have cared for Him personally. How does this affect how you think about ministering to those less fortunate than yourself? |

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| **QUESTION**  What is it about the reward awaiting us as Christians that brings you the most joy? |

**Jesus Will Punish Those Who Refuse Him**

Read [Matthew 25:41–46](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.41-46).

God designed a punishment for the devil and his cohorts who rebelled against God. But anyone who repeats that rebellion in their life receives the same sentence. Our choice to accept or reject Jesus is the central decision of our life. Its consequences are eternal. Jesus is highlighting for us how we can know our faith in Him is real and our trust in Him is complete: Our life will look like His. We cannot emphasize this point enough. We do not need to live in fear of eternity apart from Him. Genuine faith leads to genuine reward.

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| **QUESTION**  List some people or groups in your church or community who could use assistance right now. How could you organize a project as a small group or how you can act to provide for one of them? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *Jesus’ description of separating sheep and goats may be related to the Old Testament’s use of both animals as sacrifices, with goats far more commonly used as sin sacrifices. The most well-known example of goats used this way comes from* [*Leviticus 16*](https://biblia.com/bible/leviticus/16)*. The sin offering on the Day of Atonement required two goats, one as a sacrifice and one that carried the sins of the nation away from the people; this goat was sent into the wilderness. The second goat is a likely source for the term* scapegoat*.* |

**Reflect**

**Jesus Will Reward His People**

We are not welcomed into the kingdom of God only because of how we treated others. We have compassion on them and love them as Jesus would *because* we are genuinely part of His kingdom. Genuine faith leads to caring for those in need, not just talking about it. We must care for them in tangible ways ([James 2:14–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jas2.14-17)).

Jesus never had compassion on the crowds without meeting people’s needs. When they were sick, He healed them. When people were outcast and marginalized, He welcomed them and ate with them. When they were hungry, He fed them. If we truly belong to Jesus, our life must look the same.

**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**  Why is it necessary for us to be doers of the word and not hearers only? |

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| **QUESTION**  In [Matthew 25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25), when Jesus described those who belong to Him, why do you think He chose to focus on their actions toward the hurting and broken people in our world rather than other aspects of a Christian life we tend to focus on (e.g., prayer, Bible reading, church attendance)? |

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| **QUESTION**  Are you currently helping those in need? What could you be doing to help minister to those in your community who are in need? |

**Activate**

Jesus will reward us for how we care for the broken and lost people around us. Ask the Lord to help you see opportunities to assist the poor that you might currently be overlooking.

**Challenge**

Are ministries in your church or organizations in your community looking for volunteers? To help the hurting in our world, we don’t need to cross an ocean. Often, we can just cross the street. Ask Jesus to help you see those who are lacking and take steps to meet their needs, not only by donating, but by personally meeting those people face-to-face and bringing the love of Jesus into their life.

**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**  “In keeping with his [God’s] promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” ([2 Peter 3:13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Pe3.13) (NIV); [Revelation 21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Re21) and [22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Re22)).  **The Significance of This Doctrine**  In the midst of our daily struggles and difficulties, we are encouraged by the promise of what God has prepared for His faithful followers. Jesus told His disciples, and made the promise to all generations of Christians, “I am going there to prepare a place for you … if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me” ([John 14:2–3](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn14.2-3), NIV).  After the one thousand-year Millennium, all Christians will dwell forever with God and have access to a beautiful, restored universe. This doctrine is important because it assures us of our future abode in a world far better than this one. |

**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 Will Reward His People**

Read [Matthew 25:31–46](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.31-46).

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 reward He will one day give His people and the life it should compel us to live? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 2: Faith in Action**

Read [James 2:14–19](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jas2.14-19).

James did not mince his words! Real faith leads to real action. For those who live as Jesus did, we cannot see hurting people and only say that something should be done. We must be the ones who help. If we do not, James said our faith is not genuine. Some may prefer he wouldn’t have been so blunt about the issue, but this is an unbending truth for the people of God.

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| **QUESTION**  Why do you think this issue is so important to James? |

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| **QUESTION**  How does it make you think about what truly matters to Jesus? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 3: The Reward of New Creation**

Read [Revelation 21:1–5](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Re21.1-5).

In [Matthew 25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25), Jesus used a story to depict welcoming His children into His kingdom. Today’s passage fills out further what eternity with Jesus will be like. It’s worth reflecting on the beauty and wonder of the new creation waiting for us. In that world, we will find no hungry or hurting people.

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| **QUESTION**  How often do you reflect on the reward waiting for us as Christians? Is it something you are truly longing for? |

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| **QUESTION**  How might reflecting on what we will experience in eternity with Jesus be a healthy spiritual practice for you? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 4: Meeting Needs**

Read [Matthew 14:13–21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt14.13-21).

The disciples wanted to send the crowds away to find their own food. Jesus gave them a command: *You feed them*. A principle behind that command remains to this day for those who follow Him. When we see hungry people, we should feed them. This can quickly become overwhelming. We may not be able to feed everyone, but we can start with someone.

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| **QUESTION**  Why do you think Jesus didn’t just let the disciples go with their plan of sending everyone home? In other words, why did He make feeding the people partially their responsibility? |

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| **QUESTION**  Jesus told them to feed the crowd, but then He provided the food. How does this affect you as you reflect on how you can feed the hungry in your community? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 5: Rewarded Accordingly**

Read [Galatians 6:7–10](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ga6.7-10).

Scripture contains an unmistakable theme concerning the reward we receive from God. Paul is clear on this theme as well. The theme may not be what we would have guessed, however: Our reward will be according to our actions. It’s tied to *what we have done*. This doesn’t mean we earn our way into heaven. Salvation and the resulting entry to heaven is the sole work of Jesus. But it means Jesus longs to give us rewards in addition to eternity with Him, and those rewards will be in proportion to how we have lived for Him.

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| **QUESTION**  How often do you think about meeting Jesus and being rewarded by Him? Do you long for the rewards Jesus wants to give you? |

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| **QUESTION**  What might happen if we increased our awareness of how much Jesus wants to give us those things? |

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