**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))

*Many people want to know what the Bible says regarding the future. What is judgment all about? What does the Bible say about rewards for those who serve God? What do we know about the return of Jesus? What does this mean for our life while we wait for His return? These are just a few of the topics we’ll explore through this volume.*

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Two 24-piece puzzles* *• Smartphone, stopwatch, or watch for a timer****Getting Ready*** *• Remove one piece from one of the puzzles.* *• First time leading* Learn *for Youth? Look here for 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**

**Welcome**

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank everyone for coming. Your friendliness here can create comfort levels that encourage student participation later.*

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| **QUESTION**What goes through your mind when a teacher says you’re about to have a pop quiz? |

**Opening Prayer**

*Prayer thoughts: Thank God that He provides answers to life’s most important questions in His Word. Ask that the Holy Spirit would encourage daily devotion to Jesus, so, unlike a pop quiz, we’ll always be ready for Jesus’ return.*

**Introduction**

Today, we’re talking about finishing strong in life. By working hard at the things important to God, we’ll be ready at any moment for Jesus’ return.

**Group Activity**

**Stopwatch Puzzle**

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Two 24-piece puzzles* *• Smartphone, stopwatch, or watch for a timer****Getting Ready*** *• Remove one piece from one of the puzzles.* |

For our activity today, you’ll be in two groups.

• *Divide the group evenly, and give each group one of the puzzles.*

• *Don’t tell the students that one puzzle is missing a piece until the activity is over.*

Dump out your puzzle, and mix up the pieces. Lay the pieces facedown. When I say, “Go,” whichever group assembles their puzzle first wins. When the last piece is set in the puzzle, yell, “Done!” Then, everyone needs to lift their hands above their head.

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| **QUESTION**(*To the losing team*) What prevented you from winning? |

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| **QUESTION**What did you think when you realized you were missing a piece? |

Here’s the thing: No matter how good your puzzling skills were, you couldn’t finish without having everything you needed. Let’s see how this plays out in our session on finishing strong for Jesus. First, let’s watch this video.

**Watch**

**Consider What the Bible Says**

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

The parable we’re about to read follows Jewish marriage customs in Jesus’ day. In it, you find ten girls in the bridal party waiting for the groom to arrive at an unexpected time. When the groom arrives, the wedding party follows him to the ceremony and celebration.

**Everyone Has an Opportunity to Finish Strong**

The bridesmaids didn’t know when the wait would be over. They just had to be ready for the groom’s arrival. Pay attention to what Jesus said in this parable. It’s a reminder that if we’re going to finish strong in this life, we need to keep close to God and serve Him wholeheartedly. This is because we never know when Jesus will return or when our time here is over.

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

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever been unprepared for something, and it was too late to get ready? Briefly tell us what happened. |

* *Share a personal story of being unprepared for something. Examples include forgetting to pack important items in your luggage, procrastinating studying for a test, or missing a key ingredient in a recipe.*

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| **QUESTION**Why did not having enough oil make five of these virgins foolish? |

Just because they were invited to the party didn’t mean they could sit around unprepared. They didn’t do what it took to be ready for the groom’s arrival at any moment. Our Christian walk is a lot like this. Everyone is invited to experience salvation, but not everyone is willing to do what it takes to follow Jesus and be ready to meet Him at any moment. Staying ready for Jesus’ return takes perseverance and dedication. If followers of Jesus don’t intentionally grow spiritually, their readiness can quickly fade.

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| **QUESTION**What made the wise bridesmaids wise? |

Planning is key to finishing strong with Jesus. Perhaps the foolish bridesmaids thought they had enough. Maybe they just didn’t concern themselves with how much they would need. But the wise ones were ready whether the groom came early or late. They were focused on what it took to finish strong at any moment. Our attitude toward finishing strong is also a big factor in how we finish.

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| **QUESTION**What might an attitude like the foolish bridesmaids look like in relation to being ready to meet Jesus? What about the wise bridesmaids? |

**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. |

**Everyone Needs Endurance to Finish Strong**

Read [Matthew 25:5–10](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.5-10).

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| **QUESTION**How do you think the five felt who returned and found the door locked? |

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| **QUESTION**In this parable, who was responsible for ensuring each bridesmaid had enough oil? |

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| **QUESTION**What does this parable say to you about always being ready for the return of Jesus? |

We are all responsible for our relationship with Jesus. He is coming again, and we need to be ready. And like the locked door at the wedding, a day will come when the chance to get into a relationship with Jesus will be gone. Numerous people throughout history have thought, *I have time to get right with Jesus later*. Sometimes you do, and other times you don’t.

**Finishing Strong Is a Personal Process**

Read [Matthew 25:11–13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt25.11-13).

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| **QUESTION**What do you imagine it would have felt like being locked out of the wedding because you failed to be ready? |

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| **QUESTION**Who is responsible for you being spiritually prepared for Jesus’ return? |

Being prepared is an individual process that can’t be transferred or shared. The five foolish bridesmaids wanted the five wise bridesmaids to share their remaining oil because of failure to take responsibility. No one else can grow a strong relationship with Jesus for you. And no one else can carry you into heaven. You are responsible for being ready.

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| **QUESTION**Why must we always be ready for the Lord’s return? |

God’s timetable is not our timetable. Don’t allow being face-to-face with Jesus to become horrifying because you weren’t ready.

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| **QUESTION**Do you ever think about Jesus coming back? Why or why not? |

Preparation for the day you meet Jesus requires a lifestyle of choosing to follow Him. It’s an everyday thing. God is patient. However, in order to finish strong, we can’t try to take advantage of that patience. Instead, we must be ready all the time like the five wise bridesmaids.

**Reflect**

**Jesus Wants Me to Finish Strong**

In [Matthew 23–25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt23-25), Jesus painted a picture of the end times and how His followers can remain faithful and prepared. He wouldn’t do that if He was unable to help us. Think about this: His death means your life. He wants you to live with Him forever. Are you ready?

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Answering the following questions is completely voluntary. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. However, you may want to share your response with the group, but no one should feel obligated.

• *Optional: Pause for a few moments of silent reflection before asking students if they want to share.*

Preparation is vital in these final days. Don’t allow voices apart from the Bible to deceive you and keep you from finishing your life strong.

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| **QUESTION**Would you be ready if Jesus returned today? If not, what do you need to do to get ready? |

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| **QUESTION**What life changes could you make to take the next step in making your relationship with Jesus even stronger? |

**Activate**

Break into groups of two. Share with one another one thing you need to do to make sure you’re ready for the return of Jesus. Pray for each other.

**Conclusion**

Jesus told this parable about ten bridesmaids to reinforce His desire that His followers be ready for His return. He made a way for our salvation by His death and resurrection. It’s up to us to decide what we’ll do with that. Will we turn away from Him by living foolishly? Or will we be wise and always live ready to see Him face-to-face?

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| **Salvation Opportunity***Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*We don’t have to pay for our salvation; Jesus did that. However, we must make the choice to follow Jesus, live for Him, and keep watch for Him. We don’t borrow or buy salvation from another believer. Our relationship with Jesus is our own.**Is there anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?***Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond, and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as you close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.* |

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we want to keep watch and be ready for Your return. Because of You, we can look forward to Your return with joy instead of fear. We renew our commitment to live for You today. Teach us to share the gospel in simple and clear ways so lots of other people can be ready for Your return, too. Amen.

Be sure to read the daily devotions on the app. They will help you learn more about what we discussed. I look forward to seeing each of you next time to continue our journey through God’s Word.