

Small Group Guide

GODLINESS AND THE RETURN OF CHRIST

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Bart Box

July 31, 2011

2 Peter 3:1–18

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God’s Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they’ve had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today’s truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week’s message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

Sermon Outline

Godliness and the Return of Christ 2 Peter 3:1-18

A Condemnation of the False Teachers (vv. 3-7)

“The heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire...” (v. 7)

- The arguments against God’s judgment are apparently rational.
- The arguments against God’s judgment are ultimately moral.
- The arguments against God’s judgment are tragically fatal.

A Caution for the Unrepentant (vv. 8-10)

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief...” (v. 10)

- God is exceedingly patient with sinners.
 - This patience is rooted in His love.
 - This patience is displayed in His delay.

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- God is not indefinitely patient with sinners.
 - Jesus will certainly come.
 - Jesus will suddenly come.

A Challenge to the Church (vv. 11-18)

“What sort of people ought you to be...” (v. 11)

- We should be a people whose priorities reflect our beliefs.
 - If we believe this world is temporary...
 - We should live for one that is eternal.
- We should be a people whose lives radiate the gospel.
 - By declaration of truth.
 - By demonstration of holiness.
- We should be a people whose hearts long for His coming.

“Let me entreat all right-hearted readers to look onward and forward to the day of Christ’s second coming. A time draws near when Satan shall be bound, and Christ’s saints shall be changed—when sin shall no more vex us, and the sight of sinners shall no more sadden our minds—when believers shall at length attend on God without distraction, and love Him with a perfect heart. For that day let us wait, and watch, and pray. It cannot be very far off. The night is far spent. The day is at hand. Surely if our hearts are right, we ought often to cry, “Come quickly-come Lord Jesus!”” —J.C. Ryle

Message Summary

Dr. Box began by summarizing the Apostle Peter’s condemnation of the false teachers. These teachers arrogantly denied God’s holiness and faithfulness by claiming the Lord was not going to return. Their destruction was and is assured.

Next, we saw that Peter highlighted the patience of God as the reason for the seeming delay in Christ’s return. Dr. Box stated, “God loves saving sinners,” and He awaits the last person to be saved. However, God is not indefinitely patient with sinners—one day Christ will certainly and suddenly return in judgment.

Finally, in light of Christ’s return, Peter asks how then should we live as believers? The answer: By our words and by our deeds we should value the eternal over the temporary; preach the gospel in truth and holiness; and long for and hasten His return.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review the Head (What does God want me to know?), Heart (What does God want me to value?), and Hands (What does God want me to do?) aspects of the message.

- **Read 2 Peter 3:4. On the surface of the matter, why did the false teachers deny or question the return of Christ in judgment? Why does this argument appear rational at first? Do you think this argument is still attractive to some unbelievers today?**
- **Now read 2 Peter 3:3, 5–6; and Romans 1:18–23. Why were their arguments against God’s judgment ultimately moral arguments? How does the Bible describe what was wrong with their heart attitudes? How were the false teachers calling into question the holiness and faithfulness of both God and His Word? How can these passages of Scripture help us understand why unbelievers persist in ungodliness and rejection of Christ?**

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- Read 2 Peter 3:7. What are the ultimate, tragic consequences of the denial of God and His Word? Are you ever tempted to avoid addressing the consequences of sin when sharing the gospel with unbelievers? Why is it loving to share the whole truth from God's Word?
- Read 2 Peter 3:8–9. According to the Apostle Peter, why is Christ "slow" in returning? What character traits of God are highlighted by the seeming delay in judgment? How should we respond to God's mercy and patience?
- Many times in life we may struggle with God's timing. For instance, praying for a wayward child, physical suffering of a loved one, or a trying circumstance at work. How can 2 Peter 3:8–9 encourage us during those times?
- Read Ezekiel 33:11. Dr. Box said, "God loves saving sinners." Do you love seeing sinners saved by God's grace? How are you positioning your life (schedule, family, money, etc) to be a part of God's saving work among sinners?
- Read 2 Peter 3:7; 10. Will everyone be ready for Christ's return? Why or why not? What are the consequences of being unprepared? Will you be ready for Christ's return? Will your family? Will your neighbors?
- "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness[?]" (2 Peter 2:11) If we believe this world is not our home and the things of this world will be consumed by fire, what should our priorities be? What will last into eternity? What reprioritizing might we need to do?
- To radiate the gospel, what must we declare? How must we act? With whom are we to share the gospel?
- Read 2 Peter 3:12 and Acts 3:19–21. How can we hasten the day of the Lord? What must occur before the Lord returns? How is this fact further incentive to take the gospel to every tribe, tongue, and nation?
- Jesus died and rose again 2,000 years ago. Are you thankful that the Lord was patient so you could hear the gospel? Has every tribe, tongue, and nation heard and responded yet? Do you think God cares about all the people groups in the world? Do you think He wants us to care?
- Read 2 Peter 3:13. What will the return of Christ mean for believers?
- Read 2 Peter 3:14–15; 17–18. What are some additional warnings, commands, and encouragements that Peter gives us in light of Christ's return?
- Are you longing for Jesus Christ to return? Why or why not? What might be distracting you from desiring His coming? What changes will you make?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

Weekly Prayer Focus ...

- **Lives and Church:** *Pray that God would make us the kind of people who long for the return of Christ and hasten His coming.*

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- **Local:** *This week we are praying for our Divorce Care and Divorce Care Kids (DC4K) ministries at Brook Hills. We are also praying for Hillview Baptist, Randy Atkinson, pastor.*
- **Global:** *The week we are praying for our partner Vapor Sports and their work in Togo, Africa. We are also praying for Brook Hills short-term teams in East Asia, Seattle, and South Asia.*