

Small Group Guide

THE PROMISE OF HIS RETURN

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Jim Shaddix

December 29, 2013

2 Peter 3:1-18

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives:* Praise God for choosing us to be part of His story. Thank Him for His Word, the Bible, through which we learn Who He is. Pray for the Spirit to convict each of us about our role in proclaiming the truth of God to the world around us. Ask God to reveal to us the potential each aspect of our life holds in relation to making Him known. Pray for this new year to be marked by the spread of God's Word from our individual lives as well as our corporate life as a church. Plead with God to keep us from losing our love for His Word amidst the distractions of this world.
- *Pray for Our City:* This week we are praying for Restoration Academy, a K5-grade 12 Christian school located in the Fairfield area. Restoration Academy's vision is to address the urban crisis by providing solid, Christ-centered foundations in education and discipleship. We are also praying for Shades Valley Community Church and Jonathan Haefs, Pastor.
- *Pray for Our World:* This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionary Grace as she prepares to serve in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Europe. Grace

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will be stationed in a few different places around the world as she serves to mobilize others to engage and pray for unreached people groups living in Eurasia. To learn more about Grace, follow her blog at gracefortheroad.com.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

THE PROMISE OF HIS RETURN

2 Peter 3:1-18

What? – *The world trashes what we treasure.*

- Scripture declares Christ's return repeatedly. (1-2)
- Scoffers dismiss Christ's return rationally. (3-4)

So What? – *We can stumble at the world's scoffing.*

- Remember that God is sovereign. (5-7)
- Remember that God is timeless. (8)
- Remember that God is merciful. (9)
- Remember that God is just. (10)

Now What? – *Our response to this temporary venue is eternal values.*

- Practice righteousness for now. (11-14)
- Prepare for righteousness forever. (14)
- Share God's salvation for now. (15-16)
- Strengthen your salvation forever. (17)
- Grow in Christ for now. (18)
- Glorify Christ forever. (18)

Message Summary

Growing Christians joyfully anticipate the return of Christ because they long to be in His presence and to be without sin. Although the world ignores and dismisses the truth of Christ's return, Scripture repeatedly declares this promise and urges Christ-followers to live faithfully as we wait for His return. While we wait, we remain steadfast in the faith by remembering God's character – that He is sovereign, timeless, merciful, and just. Because we recognize the temporary nature of the earth and our life on it, we live with eternal values. We practice righteousness now, and we prepare for righteousness forever. We share God's salvation now, and we strengthen our salvation forever. And we grow in Christ now and glorify Christ forever.

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WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

As we conclude this Advent series, we focus on the promise of Christ's return. Having examined promises related to His birth, life, death, resurrection, and eternal reign, we anticipate the fulfillment of what is still to come. Ask the group if there are any world events or life circumstances that have caused them to long for Christ to come quickly. Why did they hope for His speedy return?

In the sermon, Pastor Jim organizes the outline with three questions: What? So what? Now what? Use these questions to frame your discussion of Christ's return.

- **What?**
 - What are the promises regarding Christ's return? How can we know that these prophecies will be fulfilled?
- **So What?**
 - Why is the promise of His return so important? What difference does this truth make? Why is it important for believers to long for this day and for the fulfillment of this promise? What are the implications of this promise for how we live?
- **Now What?**
 - Focus on application with this section. What does it look like in a Christian's daily life to long for Heaven and to be with Jesus? How would you describe the lifestyle, words, and attitude of someone who wants Jesus to come quickly?
 - It could be easy to yearn for Christ's return for the wrong reasons. What would be some worldly reasons for wanting Christ to come quickly? *Why* should we long for His return?
 - How do we anticipate the fulfillment of this promise? How do we *actively wait* for Him to come? If we are longing for Christ's return, what does this indicate about relationship with God? If we do not long for Christ's return, why? How can we grow in our desire for this promise to be fulfilled?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- What are the promises regarding Christ's return? Why is this truth important? What are the implications of this promise? How can we know and trust that He will return?
- In 2 Peter 3:1-2, Peter encourages the believers to *remember* the predictions of the prophets and the apostles. Why is it important for us to regularly remember the promises of Christ's return (see 2 Pet. 3:5, 8, 17)? How can we keep these promises ever before us?
- 2 Peter 1:1-4 informs Christ-followers that the world will ridicule and attack what we believe and value. How have you seen this play out in your life and in the world over the past year? Why would the world scoff at the promise of Christ's return? How should we respond to the world's criticism of biblical truth?
- How does losing sight of the hope we have in Christ's return threaten the stability of our faith?
- In 2 Peter 3:5-10, Peter encourages believers to remember four truths about God: that He is sovereign, timeless, merciful, and just. Why does Peter emphasize these four truths? Why is it

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important that we remember them? On a daily basis, what does it look like to remind ourselves of God's character?

- What does it mean for God to be sovereign? Why is this truth foundational for Christians? What questions do people have about God's sovereignty? Why does the world (and even some believers) struggle with this aspect of God's character?
- Read 2 Peter 3:8 and Psalm 90:4. What truths do these verses proclaim about God? How should these truths encourage believers?
- Read 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4, and Romans 2:4. Define mercy. In what ways is God merciful? How have those in the small group experienced God's mercy in their own lives? How should this attribute of God inform how we live and interact with the unsaved?
- In 2 Peter 3:10, God exacts judgment on the world as He has promised, and His coming judgment against sin will be purifying and devastating. How will this judgment demonstrate the justice of God? Why do some people struggle with the concept of a wrathful God? Why is it important for God to respond with wrath towards sin? How can God simultaneously be just *and* merciful?
- What prevents us from living out eternal values on a daily basis? How can we overcome such obstacles?
- Read 2 Peter 3:11, 14, 17-18. What do these verses tell us about how we are to live? Reflect on your relationships with your family, friends, and coworkers. Are these relationships holy and godly? The way that you spend your time – is it holy and godly? Is the way that you manage money holy and pleasing to God? Does the way you act and what you think about when you are alone honor God and reflect Him? What changes need to occur in your life in order for you to live a holy and godly life? What steps can you take this week to “be diligent” and to grow in obedience to these commands? Ask God for the strength to obey Him this week.
- In 2 Peter 3:18, Peter encourages believers to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.” How are you currently growing in your relationship with Christ? What needs to happen for you to grow more?
- If you feel stale in your relationship with God and are not currently growing, why? What have you been pursuing and making a priority in your life? Is there any sin you need to confess? Are you spending time with God regularly in prayer and in the study of Scripture? Are you meditating on the truths of Scripture? Are you in community with other Christ-followers who are also seeking to grow? Are you sharing the gospel? If you are not currently growing, take time this week to pray, to reflect on why you are not thirsting for God, and to consider how you can grow.