

2 Peter 3

Week 4 - Waiting Well

Learning Objective

- Understand how we're called to live as we wait for the Lord's return.

Pray for your time together!

? Have you ever needed to wait a long time for something you really wanted? What happened?

Possible Answers: A special toy growing up, my acceptance letter for college, for my (now) husband to propose.

Optional Transition: Tonight's passage, the last chapter of 2 Peter, talks about the Lord's return and what our focus should be as we wait for Him.

Read Out Loud: 2 Peter 3:1-10 (NIV)

¹ Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. ² I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

³ Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." ⁵ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. ⁶ By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

In this passage, Peter demonstrates the power of God's Word when he references two Genesis passages about the creation of the world (Genesis 1) and Noah and the flood (Genesis 6-8).

? Peter leads off with his desire that both of his letters have stimulated "wholesome thinking." What do you think he means by this phrase? What aspects of his letters have led you to wholesome thinking?

Possible Answers: Setting our hearts and minds on the promises of God - cr Philipians 4:8, 1 Peter 1:13, 2 Peter 1:4; Peter's constant reminders of God's promises, his reminders of the consequences of unwholesome thinking (believing false teachings).

? In chapter 2 we heard Peter's concern regarding false teaching, and now in vs. 3, he emphasizes that "above all" believers should be prepared to encounter scoffers. Why might he be focusing so much on those who are in disagreement with the Gospel message?

Possible Answers: We will encounter scoffers; they can be persuasive and we can easily be led to believe their message over the truth of the Gospel - when we forget God's promise, we slip back into following the desires of our sinful flesh - see v.3, also cr. Romans 6:5-13

? What does Peter say in order to help the reader dispute the scoffers?

Possible Answers: See verses 5-7. He is reminding the reader of God's power and authority in the creation and destruction of the world.

? What do you do when you're faced with doubt about your faith (either externally or internally)?

Possible Answers: I go to the parts of the Bible that speak most to my heart and root me in truth. I talk with some of my Gospel friends who help point me back to truth. I try to respond to external doubt from others through gentleness and by providing an open ear.

? Optional: In verse 9 we read about a promise made by the Lord. What is this promise?

Possible Answers: Salvation for those who put their trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord; cr Luke 18:7-8; 1 Timothy 1:16; Romans 10:9-10 .

? Generation after generation has thought that God's promises would be completely fulfilled in their time, yet they did not experience His return. Why is God waiting so long?

Possible Answers: He is patient with us and desires for all people to repent and be saved; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9; God's timing is different from our timing. See vs. 8.

Revelation 21:1-7 (NIV)

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

? Optional: What does Peter mean when he says, “the day of the Lord will come like a thief?” How should this shape our daily walk with Christ?

Possible Answers: We should be intentional in sharing about the hope we have in Christ and living in a way that reflects Him in our lives. Matthew 24:36-44, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

? How does our faith impact our view of the “day of the Lord”?

Possible Answers: We don’t have to live in fear of punishment because our sins have been forgiven - Christ’s death on the cross atoned for our sins and now we’re united with him - God sees us as holy and blameless in Christ right now! cr. 1 Peter 2:9, Romans 8:28-30

Leader’s Note: Discussions around the end times can be controversial and create fears/doubts for many Christians - if the conversation begins to go this way, it may be helpful to reference a few verses about our standing before God as believers (Ephesians 1:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 1:22) - it might also be helpful to mention that we don’t know exactly what judgment day will look like, but we can rest in knowing that all of our sins are forgiven and won’t be counted against us.

Read Out Loud: 2 Peter 3:11-18 (NIV)

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. ¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

¹⁷ Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

? These verses comment on how we are supposed to live as the last days are approaching. How can we uphold the call to lead a holy and godly life (vs. 11) without slipping into legalism?

Leader’s Note: See verse 11 & 14.

Possible Answers: Remember that we can’t make ourselves holy, only God can - we can’t be saved by our own works, we are saved and justified only because of the grace of God through the shed blood of Christ on the cross - spend time in the Word, prayer, Christian community and accountability.

Religion says, 'I obey; therefore I am accepted.' Christianity says, 'I'm accepted, therefore I obey.'
- Tim Keller

? What are some challenges we encounter in this season of waiting? How do you personally fight against them?

Possible Answers: Temptation to focus on difficult circumstances and to become impatient, anxious, depressed, etc.; or when things are going well, to become proud/self-sufficient and to put our hope in comfort, security, our own strength, etc. - temptation to forget that Jesus is coming. We can fight this temptation by spending time in prayer and the Word, meditating on God's promises in Scripture, being in intentional community with other believers; taking time to slow down.

? Optional: In verse 16 Peter states that some parts in the apostle's letters are hard to understand.

What are some phrases/verses in this passage that are unclear to you? How can we decipher these ideas together as a group?

Leader's Note: This is an opportunity to share about a word/phrase/concept that you've struggled/are struggling to understand - being vulnerable in this can help the group to feel more comfortable to speak up when something doesn't make sense.

Other ideas: Studying verses (referencing commentaries, study Bibles, sermons/articles; studying in context of the whole letter/book) - Here are a few suggested resources: desiringgod.org, gospelinlife.com, blueletterbible.org,

? Why does Peter command his readers to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (vs. 18)? What are some practical ways we can do this?

Possible Answers: He makes this command to help his readers fight against distortions of the Gospel message - the more we grow in our knowledge of God and experience his grace, the more we can recognize and counter these lies - refer back to 2 Peter 1:2.

For Discussion And Accountability

? Knowing the Lord will come like a thief in the night, how are you living life differently because of this?

? Are you looking forward to the day of the Lord right now? Why do you feel this way?