

Matthew 24:32-25:13

³² “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁶ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

¹ “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹² But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

2 Peter 3:1–7

¹ This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” ⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Let's Warm Up: Questions to break the ice.

1. What's a memorable moment that you were unprepared for?

For our honeymoon, Mitzi and I took an Alaskan cruise. We spent a lot of time just staring at the water, waiting for whales. When they did show up, we would point frantically and yell, "Whale! Whale!" I filmed some clips on my phone and camera. Or at least I thought I did. When I watched the videos, I realized I hit record too late or hit record too many times so I filmed the moments between whale sightings. Long story short, I missed the whale most of the time! It was hard, because we never knew when, or if, the whales would pop up.

In this week's passage, Jesus tells His disciples to prepare for His return so they won't be caught off guard.

2. Are you "TEAM PLAN IT OUT" or "TEAM PLAY IT BY EAR"? Why is the other team wrong?

Do you need to put everything on a calendar to anticipate, plan, and prepare? Do you get anxious if you don't know what will happen ahead of time? Does being spontaneous make you queasy?

Does planning too much stifle your ability to live in the moment or adapt? Who knows what you will miss out on if you're not open to unexpected surprises?

Which one are you and why is it better than the other side?

In this week's passage, Jesus helps us prepare for His return. We can plan for some things but other things we can't.

3. What events or experiences are you looking forward to this year?

Are you excited to get away from it all or to celebrate your 50th birthday (for the tenth time)? Looking forward to basking in the summer sun or watching the next Willingdon Christmas musical production? Can't wait to start your new job after you graduate or are you finally entering into retirement?

We have several staff and leader weddings this year and there's plenty of buzz around them. And I'm sure all of the Life Group Leaders are *so, so, so* excited to join the March 29 training.

In this week's passage, Jesus continues teaching His disciples about His return so they can prepare for it.

4. As a kid, how did you misbehave when the authority figures weren't watching?

Do you play on your phone or change the clock when the teacher leaves the classroom? Did you sneak out of the house at night to hang out with your friends? Take naps while you're supposed to be doing homework? Or did you defy the law to and stay up late at night to ... study at an illegal cram school

(<https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/2024-08-23/national/socialAffairs/Cram-or-crime-Demand-for-illegal-latenight-hagwon-classes-persists-despite-govt-crackdowns/2119400>).

I took Information Technology in a Global Society (shout out to my IB brethren) which included learning Microsoft Office 95 (<https://youtu.be/vLLWrt-zmTo>) and dBase 3 (<https://youtu.be/x37gAnVoJE8>). The software was light, but

the computers were *powerful*, with 800 MHz processors and 64 MB of RAM!!! The teacher said if he caught anyone playing video games, he'd automatically fail them. So, what did I do? I bypassed the security software and installed Starsiege: Tribes (https://youtu.be/Un-s_kYb0T4) for LAN parties during class. I was never caught! Don't worry, I won't install a 30-year-old game on our office computers unless Pastor Vinh tells me to.

In this week's passage, Jesus tells His disciples the fates of those who obeyed or didn't while the king wasn't watching.

5. What's something you wish you could redo from your past?

What choice do you regret? Don't make this question too serious, it's just an icebreaker.

If only you had taken Demystifying the Hipster (<https://time.com/3153922/tufts-hipster-culture-course/>) instead of Intro to Engineering or invested in Apple instead of Enron. Maybe a restaurant server told you, "Enjoy your meal!" and you said, "You, too!" Why did you buy that model of car, appliance, or computer?

I wish I had appreciated learning violin and piano instead of slacking off. I wish I had known more about my joints and anatomy when working out in my 20s to avoid injuries. I wish I had been happy with what I had in life (especially God) instead of constantly chasing after something to make me happy.

In this week's passage, Jesus warns that people will regret not being ready for His return.

Let's Get Started: Questions to start thinking about the main themes.

6. Does thinking about the end of the world leave you comforted or anxious?

It really feels like the world has become more volatile. It feels like earth-shattering events are coming faster and faster, both good and bad. Technology is growing at a wild pace. Washing machines use AI to figure out how much detergent to use (https://www.lg.com/ca_en/washing-machines/lg-aiidd/)! Daily news is full of global instability with wars fought with missiles or new tariffs. Every month there's a report about something innocuous in our homes that will kill us (https://duckduckgo.com/?t=h_&q=everyday+household+items+deadly&iar=news&ia=news)!

Will this go on forever? Will another pandemic decimate humanity? Will WWII send us back to the stone age or will we eventually colonize Mars and achieve a United Federation of Planets? What will the future hold?

I wonder about my son! The world was completely different 40 years ago when I was a baby. What will it be like when he's my age? And if he has kids, what about them? Will my bloodline continue for a thousand generations or stop much sooner?

I am glad that this world will end someday, especially since Jesus will return and make the world anew (Revelation 21:1-7). All the suffering out there will be gone and there will be peace. No matter what happens, God is in control and He will accomplish His will. It's something I have to remind myself as I see the chaos in the world.

7. Pastor Vinh said, “What we do in the waiting reveals who we are.” How do our actions reflect our character while we wait?

Life is full of waiting.

What are we doing while waiting for a better job or career? Are we phoning it in because the current job doesn't matter or complaining all the time because it's lame and the pay is low? Or are we still seeking to glorify God by working faithfully and being a witness?

What are we doing while waiting for a special guy or girl? Are we resisting the world's ideals by having our minds transformed by God's Word (Romans 12:1-2)? Or are we seeking relationships with non-believers because beauty, companionship, or personality are more important than godliness?

What are we doing or looking forward to for our retirement? Are we waiting for the end of our lives by maximizing our pleasure, like the famous John Piper illustration (<https://youtu.be/UFe3awzCh6k>)? Or are we faithfully serving and loving God in this unique phase of our lives until He calls us home to be with Him?

Our actions in the waiting reveal what's important to us.

8. How would Jesus find you if He came back right now?

I know this is a heavy question. We're not looking for a right or wrong answer, but trying to the gears turning. I remember an old clip of Francis Chan saying he hopes Jesus comes back while he's preaching. That way he's getting caught doing the right thing.

Would He see that you've been dedicated and following Him? Or would He see someone who made Him a low priority? Would you be glad you lived the way you lived, or would you wish you could do things over again?

Let's Dig In: Questions to discuss the passage and how we can respond.

9. Why is it good to know we don't know Jesus' return date?

As Pastor Vinh noted, many have attempted to predict Jesus' second coming. I asked some AI chatbots to tell me when. This is my favorite response. I don't know why they want me to share it, but I will.

God loves His followers and wants what's best for us. Wouldn't letting us know His return be helpful?

Urgency. Let's say we know Jesus will return in ten years. We may live however we want for nine. If we know He'll return in the distant future, our actions won't seem to matter. By not knowing His return, we have a sense of urgency.

Continuing a legacy. We are imitating God's people throughout history. God made prophecies without dates in the OT and people waited (faithfully or unfaithfully). Think of some of Abraham's promises: a son, a nation, and land



Tell me when Jesus will return.

No. share!

say to cleverbot...



think about it

think for me

thoughts so far

(Genesis 15:4-5; 17). He waited 25 years for Isaac's birth. Abraham died before other promises were fulfilled. That's true of many heroes of the faith (Hebrews 11:13-16). They faithfully waited. Some saw the promises fulfilled while others died before fulfillment. By faithfully following God without knowing all the details, we're following in the footsteps of our ancient brothers and sisters of the faith.

Even level. For some reason, people love to find "hidden secrets" about God's plan to act like they're more special. Jesus doesn't have secret codes to unlock. There are many best-selling authors like Jonathan Cahn (<https://bereanresearch.org/book-review-the-mystery-of-the-shemitah/>) who share some new ways to interpret Scripture and predict events. Instead of coming off smarter, their works always demonstrate their lack of understanding. God lifts the humble and lowers the proud.

10. Which illustration about being prepared stands out? What does it say about Jesus' return?

The Flood and Daily Life. Thousands of years earlier, the earth was filled with violence and evil so God wanted to purge all that evil with a flood. Since Noah lived His life with God, God told him to build a big boat to save his family. Everyone else was living their regular lives and planning for the future (i.e., marrying and giving in marriage). They were completely unaware of God's plans so they were caught off guard and died. Likewise, people will be going about their daily business when Jesus comes. Many will be caught off guard.

What will we be doing when Jesus calls us to Him?

Owner vs. Thief. Thieves try to surprise owners and owners try to stop/catch the thief. Since the owner doesn't know when the thief will come, they must stay vigilant. This metaphor is used several times for Jesus' return (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; 16:15).

Are we watchful for Jesus' return?

Good vs. Bad Servant. A master gets his servant to manage his estate while he's away. If the servant is diligent and takes care of his fellow servants, he'll get promoted. If the servant thinks he's the new master, abuses the other servants, and parties hard, he'll be caught off guard when the master comes home.

The master will harshly punish the evil servant alongside other hypocrites, the same word Jesus uses to describe the religious leaders in Matthew 23. People being punished often gnash their teeth (8:12; 13:42, 50; 21:41; 22:13; 25:30, 41, 46). It's a sign of anger and rage, such as when Jews wanted to kill Stephen (Acts 7:54; cf. Job 16:9; Psalm 34:16; 46:12).

Are we faithfully obeying Jesus' commands, like making disciples (Matthew 28:18-20), or are we selfishly enjoying His blessings? And when He returns, will we be proud of what we've been doing or ashamed?

Prepared Virgins. Ten unmarried women are waiting to join the wedding procession to the wedding feast, but the groom is taking longer than expected so they doze off. Maybe he's taking too many photos or there was a donkey traffic jam. The wedding party comes and all the virgins prep their lamps. The wise virgins have extra oil to top off their lamps so they're good to go. The foolish ones forgot to bring extra oil so they're running low. Their lamps will run out before they make it to the feast. They sprint to the oil merchant, but by the time they get to the feast, the doors are closed and locked. They miss out.

The message is clear, when Jesus returns, we won't have time to prepare. We have to prepare ourselves *before* He comes. Are we waiting for His return to finally prepare ourselves?

11. How does waiting for Jesus to return shape your daily life?

Daily Hope. I often see completely heartbreaking news articles of abuse, murder, violence, and more. There is so much evil in the world! But I have hope that Jesus will come and make all things right. All that pain brings me to cry out, "Our Lord, come!" (Maranatha!, 1 Corinthians 16:22). Although my heart is still grieved, His hope keeps me going.

Telos. No, not TELUS the Internet company. Telos (τέλος) is a Greek word meaning "the goal toward which a movement is being directed, end, goal, outcome". Knowing Jesus will return shapes our lives because we have a goal to move towards.

As Jesus said, the Gospel preached to the ends of the earth precedes His return. It helps fuel my desire to equip our Life Groups to GROW in their faith and GO make disciples. And outside of church, I'm trying to see how my relationships with others can lead to that aim, too. Yes, they're my neighbors, my son's daycare teachers, and so on. But more importantly, they need to know Jesus will return.

Reminder. I am tempted to slack off. But remembering that Jesus could come at any moment is a good reminder to make the best use of my time (Colossians 4:2-6). It's not that I have to be busy 24/7, but that I should be using my time well whether it's being active or resting.

12. How would your life change if you knew Jesus was coming back tomorrow?

Would you repent of something you've been doing that's wrong? Would you have a sudden urgency to share the Gospel with the people around you? Would you start praying and being concerned about your relationship with Jesus?

Since Jesus could return tomorrow (or today, or next week, etc.), how can you live with the proper urgency in mind?

13. What has Jesus called you to do while you wait for His return?

Get right with Jesus. As Pastor Vinh said, "If Jesus' return causes anxiety or fear of judgment, then we need to get right with Jesus." That applies if you're a believer or not. If you don't believe in Jesus yet, ask your Life Group leader or other group members to explain the Gospel to you. If you're a believer, work on your relationship with Jesus. Practice praying and reading the Bible with others in your group.

Confess and Repent. Jesus died on the cross to take on the punishment for our sins so we can be forgiven. We respond by believing what Jesus has done and turning away from our sins. So, let's confess our sins and ask God to help us stop doing what's wrong. Do we need to confess and repent for not living for Him?

Figure Out What Jesus Has Called You To. Do you need to build your relationship with Jesus? Jesus is coming back, but you don't really know Him well. How can you be excited? Get to know Him. Get help from others in your Life Group.

Perhaps you need to be like the servant and take care of your fellow servants. God's blessed you with a relationship with Him, so you can help others have a relationship with Him, too. You know how to study the Bible so you can teach others to study it, too.

Share the Good News of Jesus. As Pastor Vinh said, the Good News of Jesus is for everyone, both Christian and not-yet-Christian. Who can you share the Gospel with? Do you have family members, friends, co-workers, or neighbors who need to hear it?