

LIFEGROUP LESSON
THE PANDEMIC. Confident in the Future
May 31, 2020

LEADER NOTES

Hi LifeGroup Leaders! When it comes to the future, we can be confident because of this – God wins. There is no crisis that will ever defeat or detour the ultimate victory that God will enable us to know at the end of time. The many narrative in Scripture demonstrate that, yes we go through difficulties, but God always shows us how he wins in the end. When it comes to the future, we can trust God, knowing that what he has shown us throughout history is a reminder that he will ultimately win in the future. The desired outcome from this week’s study is that you and your group members would grow your hope in the God who is large and in charge. He’s got the future!

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being extreme and 1 being non-existent how much of time and energy have you put into understanding the future as presented in the Bible?

On Sunday, Ken and Pete talked about eschatology (the study of final events of history and the ultimate destiny of people). The study of end times can be fascinating as we read prophecy in the Bible and look at world events around us. In your group, you will likely have some who have never considered what the Bible has to say about future events. You may have others who have committed significant time and energy to studying end times. Most likely, many of your group members will have a little knowledge of end times, but not enough to really be confident of what the Bible teaches about the future. The point of this question is just to raise the topic. Those who have little knowledge don’t need to be embarrassed. Those who may have a lot of knowledge don’t need to use this time as a platform! As a group leader, you can set the pace by sharing your own experience first. Be open about your own life and allow the others to follow your lead.

2. Do you find future things (the big theological word is eschatology), as presented in the Bible, something you are drawn to or something you are not overly interested in?

Part of the answer to the question has to do with how we are wired. Some of your group members may study eschatology because they are curious about their future destiny. Others look around at world events and wonder if the Bible speaks to them. Others, out of a desire to follow Jesus well, want to know how they might faithful and ready for Jesus’ return. Those group members who are not overly interested may find themselves becoming more interested as a result of this study. The point of learning more about future events is so we can be confident and trust God for the future.

3. We presented FIVE KEY EVENTS that are part of the landscape of the future as presented in the Bible. These are clearly identified and constantly reinforced in Scripture. Let's be reminded of them and dig into some Scriptures to learn more about them.

- THE CHURCH AGE- This is the time we are presently living in. It is the time when God is building his Church, those people who have come to trust in Jesus. The Church is on centre stage right now when it comes to the flow of redemptive history
 - Read Ephesians 1:22-23
 - How is the Church described in these verses?
 - What place does the Church have as described in these verses?
 - How should these descriptions of the Church impact our perspective of and approach to the Church today?

The church is ruled by Jesus and we are his body, his hands and feet here on earth. THE MESSAGE puts it this way, "At the centre of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence." The church is at the centre of God's redemptive story He is working out in history. The end times are powerfully connected to what God will do in and through the church to bring glory to Him. Although some may see the church as irrelevant or outdated in our world, our perspective should be to see the church as of ultimate importance. Our approach should be to build up the church so Christ will be glorified in and through us.

- THE RETURN OF JESUS / THE SECOND COMING. The return of Jesus is our hope and longing. The Bible describes it often and in detail.
 - Think about these facts related to the return of Jesus
 - one out of every 30 verses in the Bible mentions the subject of Christ's return or the end of time.
 - of the 216 chapters in the NT, there are well over 300 references to the return of Christ
 - only 4 of the 27 NT books fail to mention Christ's return
 - Christ spoke of his return often, especially after He had revealed His death. He never did so in vague or uncertain terms.
 - What details about the return of Jesus do these verses teach us?
 - Acts 1:11, Matthew 24:27, Matthew 25:31, Philippians 2:10-11, Matthew 24:30, Matthew 24:32, Matthew 24:44, John 14:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16, James 5:7-8, 1 John 2:28

Here are some insights from the verses:

Acts 1:11 – Jesus will return to earth one day in the same way he ascended to heaven.

Matthew 24:27 – Jesus' return will be obvious. It will not be done in secret.

Matthew 25:21 – Jesus will be glorified in his return. He will sit on his throne to judge.
Philippians 2:10-11 – Every person will acknowledge Jesus is Lord on that day.
Matthew 24:30 – Jesus will return to earth with power and great glory. Those who have not followed Him will mourn to realize their fate.
Matthew 24:32 – there are signs that will point to Jesus’ return.
Matthew 24:44 – we are to be ready for Jesus’ return as we faithfully follow Him.
John 14:3 – Jesus is preparing a place for us and is coming back for us.
1 Thess. 4:15-16 – when Jesus returns we will be raised up to be with Him.
James 5:7-8 – we are to patiently wait for His return.
1 John 2:28 – we are to “continue” in Him, to be active in growing our faith and living for Jesus.

- What does the return of Christ do for you in the way you live out your daily life?

While we wait expectantly for Jesus’ return, we are to be active in growing our faith and living for Him so that we will be ready when He comes for us.

- THE RESURRECTION. Jesus’ resurrection demonstrated his own power over death and it showed us that through Him and just like him, we too will experience resurrection. The Bible spends a good deal of time addressing our resurrection.
 - What do the Scriptures teach about the resurrection of everyone?
 - Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2, Ezekiel 37:12-14, John 5:25, 28-29, John 6:39-40, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16
 - How does the teaching of our resurrection impact you personally?

Here are some insights from the verses:

Isaiah 26:19 – Our bodies will rise like those who wake up and shout for joy!
Daniel 12:2 – All people will rise again, some to everlasting life, others to condemnation.
Ezekiel 37:12-14 – God is going to raise us up again. We have his promise.
John 5:25, 28-29 – We will hear his voice and rise up to life.
John 6:39-40 – We can be confident in Jesus that He will raise us up to be with Him.
1 Cor. 15:51-52 – We will be raised up with new, imperishable, bodies.
1 Thess. 4:13-16 – We can have confident hope in our future resurrection!

- How does the teaching of our resurrection impact you personally?

The reality of our future resurrection changes everything. Rather than live as if this life is all we have, we live knowing that this life is a time to follow Jesus, knowing that He will soon come back to raise us up to be with Him. We can have confidence and hope that Jesus will be true to His promise.

- THE JUDGMENT. Perhaps the most frightening aspect of our future is the teaching around the judgment. For those outside of Christ it will be a day of reckoning. However, for those who are followers of Jesus it will be a day when our commitment to Christ will be vindicated. The final judgment is not intended to ascertain our spiritual condition but rather to make our status public.
 - What do the Scriptures teach us about the judgment?
 - Acts 17:31, Romans 5:2, Hebrews 9:27, Matthew 16:27, John 5:22 & 27, Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10,

Here are some insights from the verses:

Acts 17:31 - God has set a day for the judgement.

Romans 5:2 – We stand in God’s grace, no longer objects of His wrath.

Hebrews 9:27 - All of us are destined to be judged by God after we die.

Matthew 16:27 – At the judgement we will be rewarded for what we have done.

John 5:22, 27 – Jesus will be our Judge.

Romans 14:10 – We will all stand before God’s judgment seat.

2 Cor. 5:10 – All of us will stand before God to give an account for the way we’ve lived.

- Louis Berkhof states this about the judgment and the sins of believers. He writes, “Scripture leads us to believe that (the sins of believers) will be (revealed), though they will, of course, be revealed as pardoned sins.”
 - What do you think of Berkhof’s understanding of the sins of believers being judged?

The fact that our sins will be revealed is a warning to live a life pleasing to God while we are here on earth. The fact that are forgiven our sins is a tremendous relief!

- How are we to respond to the reality that one day we will be judged?

We are to live our days faithfully following Jesus ,the One before whom we must give an account, the One who has forgiven our sin.

- THE NEW HEAVEN & THE NEW EARTH God is going to make all things new. When talking about heaven here we are talking about the atmospheric heavens not the abode of God.
 - What are some wild ideas that people have of heaven?

Here are some wild ideas you may have heard from people:

Heaven is boring, not a place you’d want to be.

Heaven is harps and angels floating on clouds.

Anybody who lives a good enough life gets to go to heaven when they die.

- Examine the following verses to see what you can learn about the New Heaven and the New Earth.
 - 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1, Isaiah 66:22, Isaiah 65:17

Here are some insights from the verses:

2 Peter 3:13 – Heaven is something to look forward to. It will be a place of righteousness.

Rev. 21:1 – There will be a new heaven and new earth – our current earth will pass away.

Isaiah 66:22 – The new heaven and new earth will endure forever.

Isaiah 65:17 – God is going to create a new heaven and new earth, so amazing that we will forget all about this present earth.

- Do you have any questions about heaven?

Here are some other great resources about heaven:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/heaven-like.html>

Heaven: Randy Alcorn -

https://www.amazon.ca/s?k=heaven+randy+alcorn&crid=38KKMYRTFSPU4&srefix=Heaven+Randy+A%2Caps%2C157&ref=nb_sb_ss_i_1_14

Peter Kreeft, Professor of Philosophy at Boston University, speaks to over 30 common questions we have about heaven. Well worth the read!

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/theology/what-will-heaven-be-like.html>

4. Outside of the five main events of the future that we have looked at what other perspectives do you have or do you know of others to have regarding the future?

5. How does understanding and embracing the future, as God explains it, help you live your day to day life?

MISSIONS PRAYER REQUESTS

Creekside Missionaries the 'N Family' serve in Southeast Asia with Wycliffe, currently in the Netherlands.

Please pray for them:

- Praise God that they found a solution with immigration there for Erin.

- Jason was able to schedule reconstructive surgery of his right knee ACL for June 5th.

- Pray regarding the aircraft accident in Papua, which killed the MAF* pilot, Joyce Lin. Pray for her parents and family who could not attend the funeral due to travel restrictions and for the aircraft crash investigation people that they can get to the bottom of what caused this accident. Also pray for the MAF team who is processing this difficult situation.

*Mission Aviation Fellowship