

While We Wait

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Peter 3:1-13

MAIN POINT: Peter wrote that Jesus will return soon, so we should obey Him and tell others about Him.

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return?
We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

Peter's story of faith began when Jesus said, "Follow Me." (Matt. 4:18) Peter and his brother Andrew—two fishermen from Galilee—left their nets and followed Jesus. As one of Jesus' twelve disciples, Peter witnessed firsthand Jesus' miracles and teachings. He saw Jesus heal his mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14) and raise a little girl from the dead (Luke 8:49-55). He saw Jesus walk on water, and Peter walked on water too. (Matt. 14:25-29)

Peter believed that Jesus is the Messiah (Matt. 16:16), and he was understandably upset when Jesus predicted that Peter would deny Him (Matt. 26:34-35). Peter fell asleep as Jesus prayed in the garden, and he drew his sword

to defend Jesus when He was arrested. (Matt. 26:40; John 18:10) Peter denied Jesus three times, but after the resurrection Jesus appeared to Peter and the other disciples. Then Jesus restored Peter to ministry at the sea of Galilee. (John 21:15-19)

The first 12 chapters in the Book of Acts record the Holy Spirit's work through Peter after Pentecost. God revealed to Peter that the gospel is for everyone—Jews and Gentiles. Peter was arrested and imprisoned for sharing the gospel, but an angel of the Lord rescued him. (Acts 12:1-8)

When Peter wrote his second letter, he was in prison again. Peter was aware that death was imminent. (2 Pet. 1:13-15) Like Jude, Peter warned against false teachers. Some people thought the believers were foolish for thinking Jesus is coming again. Peter explained that God is patient, and He wants everyone to trust in Jesus. Soon afterward, Peter was killed in Rome as Jesus had predicted. (John 21:18-19)

Peter's letter was written nearly two thousand years ago to believers who were not far removed from Jesus' life on earth. We still wait eagerly for Jesus' return, but God calls us to use our time on earth as an opportunity to better know and love Him, and to tell others about Him.



Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use dramatic timing:** As you speak, emphasize God's patience by speaking slowly and deliberately. Use dramatic pauses to give the sense of waiting on God's timing to see Jesus.
- **Vary your posture:** Start the story sitting. As you begin to talk about Jesus' promised return, stand up to lend additional power to your words. Consider crouching down when you talk about "a thief in the night" to emphasize the mystery of God's timing.

While We Wait

2 Peter 3:1-13

It had been about 30 years since Jesus returned to heaven, and **Peter**—one of the original twelve disciples and also one of Jesus' closest friends—was now much older. **He was a leader in the Christian church, and he was now a prisoner in Rome when he wrote a letter to other believers.**

Peter warned the believers against false teachers who tempted them to sin. He did not want these false teachers to lead the believers away from Jesus. He told the believers to turn to the Scriptures to know how to live, and he gave them instructions for living the way Jesus wanted them to live.

Peter also wrote about the day Jesus will return. Some of the false teachers said that Jesus will never come back. But Peter had been with Jesus when He promised that He would come back! So **Peter told the believers to be ready.**

Peter wrote to remind his dear friends of what the prophets said and what the Lord commanded. "First, people are going to come and make fun of you. They will say things like, 'If Jesus is really coming back like He promised, where is He?'"

"God is not being slow to keep His promise. He is being patient; He does not want anyone to die without knowing Jesus. He wants everyone to turn from their sin and trust in Him!"

Peter wrote, "The Day of the Lord will come when we do not expect it—like a thief in the night. God will judge the world. Until then, you should live a holy life by the Holy Spirit's power. Live in a way that pleases God. Jesus

will come again and make the new heavens and a new earth.”

At this time, the Roman emperor persecuted Christians. He punished them or even killed them. Not long after Peter wrote this letter, he was killed because he followed Jesus.

Christ Connection: Some people thought the believers were foolish for thinking Jesus is coming again. Peter explained that God is patient, and He wants everyone to trust in Jesus. At just the right time, Jesus will come again, and we look forward to the day when He creates the new heavens and a new earth.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
ADVENTURE!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover how God's Word can help them grow in the gospel. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Introduce the STORY

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KEY PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return?
We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask them to share about a time they had to wait for something they really wanted. Did they ever get what they were waiting for?

SAY • Sometimes it feels like we spend our whole lives waiting for things: waiting to be tall enough to ride a roller-coaster, waiting to lose your first tooth, or waiting for our birthday to come. We have to wait for a lot of things, including Jesus to return! Do you think waiting is easy or hard?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "The New Creation" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "The New Creation" on the activity page. Kids will use the space below the picture to recreate it without the tension of brokenness.

SAY • The world is broken by sin, and bad things happen. People get sick or die, violent storms destroy homes, and pets get lost. But Jesus has promised to make all things new when He returns. He will make all the bad things in the world good again, as God intended.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Get ready!

- paper
- pencils or markers

Provide kids with paper and pencils or markers. Ask the kids to list or draw pictures to show things they would do to prepare for different events.

Suggested events: a swim party, a trip to the movies, a piano recital, school, a circus, a soccer game

SAY • For each of those possible events, you would need very different clothing or equipment. Can you imagine going to a swim party wearing your soccer cleats? And you certainly would feel silly wearing a swimsuit to a piano recital. Today we will hear about what Peter told Christians to do to be ready for Jesus' return to earth!

OPTION 2: What time is it, Mr. Peter?

Choose a volunteer to be *Peter*. Instruct him to stand at one end of the room while the rest of the class stands shoulder to shoulder at the other. The class shouts together, "What time is it, Mr. Peter?" *Peter* will face the wall and give a time (5 o'clock) and the kids will advance that many steps.

When the line of kids gets close to *Peter*, he can answer the question by saying, "It's tagging time!" *Peter* will chase the kids back to the starting area. If *Peter* tags another kid, he or she will be *Peter* the following round.

SAY • We don't know the exact date and time that Jesus will return. Jesus said that only God the Father knows. While we wait, we can focus on living for Jesus and telling others about Him.



Transition to teach the story

Teach the STORY

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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader enters wearing a flight suit and carrying a large helmet.]

LEADER • Welcome back to our space training program! It's great to see you all again, and I'm so excited to tell you that in just a few hours we'll be blasting off on our next space mission. Our team has prepared for months and we're all eager to go.

It's hard to believe that the moment we've been waiting for so long is finally here! It's been hard to wait because we're so excited to get to space, but now that we're finally going I know all the waiting has been worth it. We've had to consistently practice our launch procedures and keep up with our exercise regimens. Even though we knew launch day was a ways off, we had to live ready to go. There's no slacking off if you want to be an astronaut!

Have you ever had to wait for something for a

long time? How did you feel when you got what you waited for? [*Allow time for kids to respond.*] That reminds me of the Bible story we're going to hear today.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Speaking of waiting well, that reminds me of our big picture question. *How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return? We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.* Let's hear our Bible story and listen for ways that Peter encourages us to do these things as we wait for Jesus to return.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

LEADER • Over the last few weeks we've heard stories about how to live as we wait for Jesus to return. We learned that Paul wrote a letter to Philemon encouraging him to forgive his servant Onesimus and treat him as a brother in Christ. We also read about Paul's letter to the believers in Thessalonica encouraging them to stand firm in their faith, even when they faced many trials. Last week we read from Jude's letter that helps us to remember God's truth, even when the world tries to tell us something different. Today we're going to read from one of Peter's letters and hear more about what it means to wait well for Jesus.

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 2 Peter 3:1-13. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "While We Wait."

• Bibles
• "While We Wait" video
• Big Picture Question
Poster
• Bible Story Picture
Poster

LEADER • Peter wrote that Jesus will return soon, so we should obey Him and tell others about Him. He wrote this letter to believers who were also eagerly waiting for Jesus to return. But waiting isn't always easy is it? The believers were often made fun of for believing that Jesus was coming back. They were even called foolish!

Peter encouraged the church to continue to live godly lives. He knew Jesus and knew that when Jesus made a promise, it was certain to happen. Jesus had promised to return, and He will keep that promise. We might feel impatient at having to wait so long for Jesus to keep His promise. Why is God taking so long? Why can't He just come back right now? God loves every person on this earth and doesn't want anyone to die apart from Jesus. God's timing is perfect, and Jesus will return exactly when He is supposed to.

Peter warned the believers about people who would try to pull them away from following Jesus. These people are called false teachers because they teach wrong things about Jesus. But Peter told the believers to look to God's Word for the truth about who Jesus is. We can trust that God's Word is true because it comes directly from God!

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • Some people thought the believers were foolish for thinking Jesus is coming again. Peter explained that God is in control. He is patient, and He wants everyone to trust in Jesus. At just the right time, Jesus will come again. We look forward to the day

when He creates the new heavens and a new earth.

We are still waiting for Jesus to come back, which tells us that God is still waiting for more people to hear the gospel and respond by believing in Jesus.

How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return?

We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel. By sharing the gospel, we are playing a role in bringing Jesus back soon!

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

LEADER • According to our key passage, what is the Bible profitable for? (*teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness*) As we wait for Jesus to return, we can spend time in God's Word and find encouragement in how to live as we wait.

Lead boys and girls in singing "Inspired by God."

- Key Passage Poster
- "Inspired by God" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • What are situations we often have to wait for? What makes waiting easier or harder? Think about that as we watch this video clip.

Show the "Unit 35, Session 4" discussion starter video. Discuss how the kids in the video seemed to feel about waiting. When might waiting be good? Ask the kids in your group if they would wait in line for a movie they did not want to see or to buy a toy they were not interested in. Is it easier to wait when you know the thing you are waiting for is good?

LEADER • Often, we are willing to wait longer when we expect something good. If you don't like ice cream,

- "Unit 35, Session 4" discussion starter video

you probably wouldn't wait in line for ice cream. When Jesus returns, He will restore the earth to be perfect again. Nothing will be better than that, so we can eagerly look forward to Jesus' return! Waiting isn't always fun, but in this case, it's definitely worth it!

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Hope of Heaven" song

LEADER • Part of waiting for Jesus to return means living a godly life, something we can't do apart from God! He is the One who gives us new life through His Son, Jesus. Let's sing praises to Him together now. Sing together "Hope of Heaven."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for the promise that Jesus will one day return. As we wait for Him to come back, help us live lives that honor and glorify Your name. Help us to tell others about You so they can have eternal life with You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Apply the STORY

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- Allergy Alert download
- balloons
- markers
- tape
- paper (optional)

Show the key passage poster and read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 with the kids to review it. Inflate balloons and tape them to the wall. Write out the verses word by word on the balloons. Instruct the kids to say the word before popping it. If any kids in your group have a latex allergy, use sheets of paper with one word of the key passage on each sheet. Kids will say the word, then wad it up and toss it to a leader.

SAY • Great job learning our key passage! God's Word shows us who He is and what He is like, and in the pages of the Bible we also learn how to live in a way that reflects God as His image-bearers.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Distribute Bibles and help kids open them to 2 Peter 3:1-13. Remind kids that Peter was one of Jesus' apostles, and he was writing to Christians who were facing hard times because of their love for Jesus.

Form two teams of kids. Alternate asking questions of each team. Allow kids on each team to work together to answer the question. If a team cannot answer a question or

answers incorrectly, allow the opposing team an opportunity to answer the question. Award each team one point for each correct answer. After asking all the questions, declare the team with the most points the winner.

Questions:

1. Who wrote the letter from today's Bible story? (*Peter*)
2. Where did Peter tell the believers to find the truth about who Jesus is? (*the words of the prophets and apostles, or God's Word; 2 Peter 3:1-2*)
3. True or false: Peter told the believers that Jesus wouldn't be back for a long time, so they could live however they wanted. (*False, **Peter wrote that Jesus will return soon, so we should obey Him and tell others about Him; 2 Peter 3:10-11***)
4. Who did Jude say was trying to get Christians to sin? (*false teachers and scoffers, Jude 18-19*)
5. What did Jude encourage the believers to do? (***Jude encouraged Christians to stand strong in the faith, Jude 20***)
6. To which church did Paul send a message about Jesus' return? (*Thessalonian church*)
7. What did Paul tell the church there? (***Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by reminding them that Jesus will return, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18***)
8. To whom did Paul write about a servant Onesimus? (*Philemon*)
9. What did Paul tell Philemon? (***Paul told Philemon to forgive his servant as a Christian brother, Philemon 15-16***)
10. ***How do we live while waiting for Jesus to return? We remember God's truth, grow in godliness, and spread the gospel.***

SAY • Great job, everyone! **Peter wrote that Jesus will return soon, so we should obey Him and tell others about Him.** Even though it can be difficult to wait patiently to be with Jesus face to face, He has invited us to share the gospel with others and invite them into God's kingdom too!



- paper plates
- construction paper
- crayons and markers
- brad fasteners
- scissors

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Waiting well clock

Provide paper plates, construction paper, and brad fasteners for kids to create a clock with hands, but instead of numbers along the edge have kids think of things they can do that glorify God while they wait for Jesus to return. Kids may draw pictures or write the words.

SAY • Peter wrote that Jesus will return soon, so we should obey Him and tell others about Him. It's important to remember that God's idea of "soon" and our idea of "soon" are not always the same. God is patient with us and allows us more time to spread the gospel so that more people might believe the truth and turn away from their sin. When you see your clock at home, you can remember that the best way to wait for Jesus is to obey Him and preach the gospel to the world.

OPTION 2: Ice cube melt

Form pairs or small groups of kids (or individuals if the class is smaller). Give each group an ice cube in a small cup. Explain that the first group whose ice cube melts wins. They may breathe on their ice cubes, but they cannot touch it in any way. The ice cubes will take a long time to melt.

SAY • Some things we can't rush. You could barely make

your ice cube melt faster by breathing on it. Similarly, we can't really make plants grow quicker than they do, and we can't make Jesus come back before God has planned. Though it might be hard to wait patiently, we can have hope knowing that Jesus will one day return. **Peter wrote that Jesus will return soon, so we should obey Him and tell others about Him.**

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.