

TALK IT OVER

Sermon Discussion Guide

Next Time Will Be Different!

Christmas 2019

Rick Warren

December 21 – 25, 2019

Jesus: "I am going to heaven to prepare a place for you. And after I prepare a place for you, I will come back to get you, so that where I am, you will also be with me!" John 14:2-3

Christmas messages usually focus on the first coming of Jesus to this world. This week we'll focus on some of the spiritual differences in the first and second comings of Jesus, and how we should get ready for his return. Let's talk it over.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

God has set a day when the entire human race will be judged with justice and everything set right. And God has already appointed the Judge, confirming him before everyone by raising him from the dead. Acts 17:31

1. Acts 17:31 discusses a Judge who sets things right with judgement. According to the verse, can anyone escape justice?
2. Why is it critical for us to understand that Jesus first came to save us, but that his second coming is about judgment?

God's unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. Ephesians 1:5

3. As a believer, how does it make you feel to be part of his unchanging plan?
4. Jesus came to save all those who would receive him. If you're a believer, you already know the joy of being in God's family.
5. What can we do to break through the resistance of those who continue to reject him?

The Lord isn't being slow in keeping his promise to return. Instead he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent. 2 Peter 3:9

6. Considering how many people rejected Jesus during his first coming, do you think the Lord's delay in returning is actually enabling a larger percentage of the world's population to repent and turn to him?

God's grace shows us how to say 'No!' to the godless, self-centered, and self-destructive ways the world lives. Instead, God's grace empowers us to live a wise, self-controlled, and God-honoring life while we look forward with great hope for the coming of our God and Savior Jesus Christ when his great glory will be revealed to all! Titus 2:12-13

7. Knowing that the next time Jesus comes it will be to judge those who have not received his free gift of salvation, how should we be getting ready? Have you asked yourself what you should be living for? Share what you believe God has revealed to you or any concerns you may have about your future.
8. How do you think you will feel and react at the instant of Jesus' second coming?

Diving Deeper (optional)

Though he was God. . . he made himself nothing, taking on the humble position of a servant and becoming a human! And while living as a man he humbled himself even further by obediently dying on a cross! Philippians 2:6-8 (NLT)

1. Discuss what it must have been like for the God of all the universe to voluntarily lay aside his divinity and make himself a lowly human in order to save all of us— fellow lowly humans.

REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.



Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week's Study

- Name three words that best describe Christmas for you.
- Compare and contrast the spiritual differences of Jesus' first arrival with the next time he will appear. The first time, he came to save the world, but will return to judge the world. He came to die, but will return to gather his family. He came in humility, but will return as the King and Lord of all. How do we get ready for his return?
- Father, we are so grateful that you sent Jesus at Christmas to save the world by dying for our sins. He came in humility but he will come back as King and Lord of all. Thank you for providing us this blessed hope as we have been made a part of your family. You've given us so much already, and yet, there is so much more you will do at Jesus' next appearing. Lord, help us be ready by acknowledging Jesus' kingship and making him the Lord of our lives. In His precious name we pray. Amen.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We've designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as "I need to spend more time in prayer." It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.