THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS

THE GOD WHO MAKES ALL THINGS NEW
SESSION 9

WHILE WE WAIT FOR HIS RETURN
2 Peter 3:1-13

The Point: God is patient, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

HIS STORY

Remember the Prophets and Apostles
Peter shared why it is so important to remember the words and commands of Christ, when he reminded the church that scoffers would come in the last days (v. 3). Scoffers criticize and make fun of others and in this case, they were ridiculing the church about Christ's return. The church was suffering for their faith. They had been displaced from their homes and had their possessions confiscated. The scoffers circled in these waters like sharks after the smell of blood. "Where is Jesus? Didn't He promise to return? Look at what you are going through for Him! Sure seems like this Jesus didn't make much of a difference!"

What were scoffers saying? Peter explained in verse four. The scoffers considered the apparent delay of Jesus' return as evidence He was not coming back. Their rationale is this: Your Lord has promised He would return since the time our ancestors died. According to them, the church was just another voice in a long line of others who said the Lord was returning—yet it hadn't happened.

Recognize God's Unique Timing
It has been about 2,000 years since the Lord promised His return. He has not come back to earth, but He will. God is faithful. Every promise He has made, He has fulfilled or will fulfill. Titus 1:2 says God cannot lie. We can trust Him completely, even when we cannot see what He is doing or when we feel the right timing is now.

We need to take to heart the same message Peter shared with the church in his day. We also need to remember that God's math is not our math as we trust Him with the resources He has given to us and live patiently and faithfully in His timing, not our own.

- **How have you seen God work in unexpected ways or in perfect timing in the Bible or in your own life?**

Live in Anticipation of His Return
Because Jesus' return will be marked by the passing away of the present heavens and earth, Peter warned the church to live accordingly. In verse 11, Peter built on the thought of the present heavens and earth passing away with a "since…then" premise. In other words, Peter was saying, "Since what was just said is true, then you should live a certain way."

The "since," or motivation, of Peter's premise is remembering the sinful and ungodly systems of the world will be judged when Jesus returns. The coming judgment will purge the world as we know it of all sin and the stains from the fall. Knowing this should encourage God's people to live with holiness and godliness. We live with holiness, as a people set apart from the world. We are in the world, but not of the world. And we live with godliness, living as the fragrance of Christ in a world saturated with the stench of sin. We are not of this world; we are of the world that is to come when Christ returns and makes all things new. That is when we will finally be home. And for now, we are ambassadors of that future home.

Essential Doctrines
Second Coming: *The Bible is clear that one day Christ will return in bodily form (Matt. 24–25). The imminent return of Christ is the hope of every Christian, knowing that when Christ returns, all things will be made new. While many have speculated as to when Christ's return will take place, Scripture gives no timeline as to when it will occur, only assuring that it will be unexpected and glorious (Matt. 24:30; Matt. 25:8-10).*

Leader Note: *Because some content from the Personal Study Guide will not be available on the One Sheet, make sure to adapt the session based on how you use the material with your group.*

YOUR STORY

- **How should thinking of Christ's return change the way we live?**
- **What are some ways we can prepare ourselves for Christ's second coming and view each day as the possible day of His return?**
- **How can we live counterculturally in a way that others find appealing and not odd?**
- **How does the "since...then" construction used in the Bible help us understand God's desire for what motivates us to obey Him?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

The Greek word Peter used for "reminder" (v. 1) is anamnesis, which contains the root word from which we get amnesia—a partial or total forgetting of what was known. In essence, the word means not to have amnesia. In this way, Peter was following the direction of the Lord who, in the Great Commission, told the disciples to teach others to "observe everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). That is our calling as well.

- **What are some commands or promises in Scripture you often to forget? What can you do to remember them?**
- **Why is it beneficial to get together with someone with the intention of sharing about God's work in your life? How is that an act of remembering?**

Heart

Patiently waiting, even when we know what we are waiting on will come, is difficult. In today's fast-paced society, we are used to instant gratification and often weigh the advantages of what we are doing mostly by its immediate benefits. This makes waiting difficult for us. But as we have seen, God calls on us to patiently wait for Him to make good on His promises to us, knowing that there is purpose in His perfect timing. Even so, our goal is not merely to wait. Instead, we are to make the most of our time as we wait. We join with God in His purpose while we wait.

- **If Christ doesn't return tomorrow, what will you do with the day He has given to you and to the unbelieving world around you?**
- **How does the knowledge of Jesus' future return challenge the way we think about struggles in our lives?**

Hands

As recipients of God's love and grace, we should look at each day we wake up without Jesus' return not as a failing by God, but an opportunity from Him—an opportunity to be on mission sharing the gospel with those who still have time to repent.

- **How have you seen God being patient with you, either in coming to salvation or growing as a disciple?**
- **How does God's patience in wanting people to turn to Him motivate us in being active in sharing that news with others?**