

GROWING DEEP IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Returning to Our Roots

STUDY SIXTEEN

Until He Returns . . . What?

Mark 13:31–37; Luke 19:11–27; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; Titus 2:11–15

*When you hear about tragedies in the news, remember, Christ is coming.
When trials surprise you, remember, He's coming. Hope takes the sting out.
Life won't be so hard if you live in the light of His soon return.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

AFTER Jesus told His followers that He would leave them, He comforted them with a promise. “When everything is ready,” He said, “I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am” (John 14:3).

Ever since that day, Jesus’ followers have clung tightly to the hope of His return. At any moment, Jesus will come for His own—what a day that will be! His return is *imminent*, which means He could appear before you finish reading this sentence. Nothing stands in His way. He’s not waiting for the fulfillment of any other prophecy before He returns. He might appear today, tomorrow, or years from now. We don’t know when, but we can be certain that He *will* return.

Until then, how does the Lord want us to live? How are Christ’s followers supposed to conduct themselves between His departure and His return?



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

In Jesus' parable of the bridesmaids, five of the ten young ladies met the bridegroom with their lamps full of oil and burning brightly (Matthew 25:1–13). In prayer, tell the Lord of your desire to be ready for Christ's return and ask Him to show you how in His Word.

Father, when Your Son appears, I want to be ready. What can I do now to prepare myself to welcome Him? I long to keep the lamp of my devotion burning for Him, and I ask for Your help. In Christ's name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The coming of a king to a village naturally prompts the villagers to make ready for his arrival. They hoist festive banners, plant colorful flowers, clean their houses, don their finest clothes, and eagerly watch for him.

Our heavenly King's arrival inspires even more enthusiasm to ready our hearts. Whenever the Scriptures mention Christ's coming, an exhortation to godly living always follows. Godliness demonstrates our eagerness to see Him and our devotion to obey Him. The following sets of passages describe four godly actions we can take to ready our lives for the King.



Observation: What to Do While Waiting for Christ's Return

Each chart below lists two passages on related themes. Read each passage in its entirety and then summarize the verses in the space provided, noting key words and similarities.



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Live Responsibly	
In their eagerness for Christ to return, some believers go to extremes. They quit their jobs, stop paying their bills, and live “by faith” on handouts from others. Scripture doesn’t condone this kind of response. What do the following passages say about living responsibly while we wait?	
<i>Luke 19:11–24</i>	<i>2 Thessalonians 3:6–13</i>

Do you want to know how to occupy this world until Christ comes? Live responsibly. Work diligently. Think realistically. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Purify Your Hearts	
What do these passages say we should do while looking for “the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13 NASB)?	
<i>Titus 2:11–15</i>	<i>1 John 3:1–3</i>

Bring to the Lord’s attention whatever may have broken your relationship with Him. Keep short accounts. Live with a clear, clean conscience. It’s a lot easier to keep your life pure when you think of His coming. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Be Watchful	
Our eagerness for Christ’s coming is like the excitement of a bride watching with hopeful eyes for her beloved. How do these passages say we should conduct ourselves while we wait for our heavenly bridegroom? What honor will He give us?	
<i>Mark 13:31–37</i>	<i>2 Timothy 4:7–8</i>

God honors being watchful, having a heart that pumps faster when we think of Christ’s return. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Worship	
Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper as an ordinance of worship for the church. What do you observe in these passages about the link between worship and waiting?	
<i>Luke 22:14–20</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 11:23–26</i>

“Until He comes.” Every time we observe the Lord’s Table is another reminder that He’s coming. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: “The Crown of Righteousness”

For his devotion and faithful service, Paul anticipated receiving “the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give [him] on the day of his return” (2 Timothy 4:8). Then he added,

And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing. (4:8)

Those whose hearts beat with loving anticipation for Christ’s return will be in line right behind Paul to receive this crown.

What is the nature of the reward? For help with the answer, consult your Bible study resources and the online commentary, *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org, where there is a chart listing all the crowns described in the New Testament. Write down the high points of your study in the space below.

What contrast did Paul use in *1 Corinthians 9:25* to describe heavenly rewards? What is it about heavenly rewards that fills you with anticipation?

How about that! The crown of righteousness is reserved for those who live their lives anticipating the Savior’s return. He honors us for living with a watchful eye.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: How to Stay Alert and Ready

How should we conduct ourselves as we wait for Christ's return? To find the answer, let's sum up the four commands from our study.

- 1) **Occupy** your days by living responsibly, working diligently, and thinking realistically. This will help you avoid extremes.
- 2) **Purify** your heart by turning from sin and living with “wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God” (Titus 2:12). This will keep your conscience clear.
- 3) **Watch** for Christ's return by “eagerly looking forward to his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). This will guard you from loving the things of this world.
- 4) **Worship** the Lord “until he comes” by remembering His life is in us (1 Corinthians 11:26). This will keep your mind focused on Him.

What's one insight from the passages that motivates you most to obey these commands?

Pick one of the commands and write down what you can do today to obey it more intentionally.



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Anticipating the loving embrace of his Savior and the blessing of his eternal rewards, Paul could face death unafraid. “For to me,” he wrote, “living means living for Christ, and dying is even better” (Philippians 1:21). Why was dying better? Because he would see Christ even sooner! Every day Paul lived, he eagerly looked forward to seeing Jesus. That hope gave Paul the courage to endure whatever hardship life handed him, and it can give us courage to face our trials too.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, each time I observe the Lord’s Supper—taste the bread and drink from the cup—I affirm that the life of Jesus is in me. As I symbolically receive His body and blood, I remember the reason He came. Taking the elements sparks an even brighter flame of longing in my heart to see Him when He comes again. Help me be diligent as I work, pure in my thoughts, watchful in my devotion, and worshipful in my spirit . . . until He comes. In Christ’s name, amen.



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

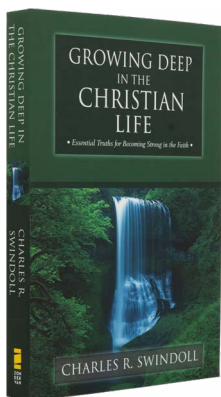
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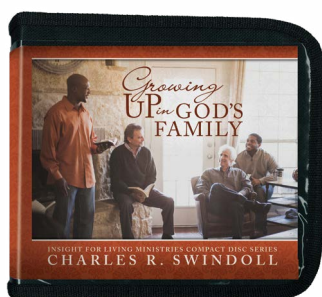
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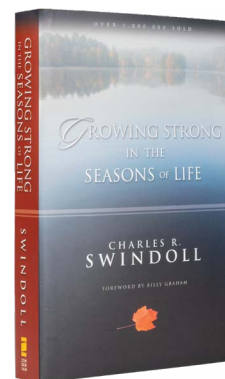
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For the 2023 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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