

X MARKS THE SPOT

"LEAVE A LIGHT ON" LUKE 12:35-40

This Week's Core Competency

Eternity – I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish his eternal kingdom. John 14:1-4 *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.*

Jesus compares the coming of the Son of Man to the coming of a thief in the night since both come unexpectedly (Mt 24:43; Lk 12:39). "If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming,' our Lord reasons, 'he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into" (24:43). If it makes sense for homeowners to be on the lookout for thieves, it likewise makes sense for disciples to live on the lookout for their Lord.

Most people won't be looking for the Son of Man when he returns. They'll be going about their daily business with no idea what's about to happen. As in the days of Noah, people will be "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in

To be ever looking for the Lord's appearing is one of the best helps to a close walk with God.

- J. C. Ryle

marriage" right up until the day he returns. "Therefore,' Jesus warns, 'keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come'" (v. 42).

So what do Christians think about the second coming? Are they watching for his return today? Recent research seems to indicate that most aren't. According to a 2006 survey by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life and the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, fully 79% of Christians in the U.S. say they believe that Christ will return to Earth *someday*. However, there is much less agreement among Christians over the timing and circumstances of his return. Only 17% of American Christians do not believe in the Second Coming. By contrast, a larger number of them, 20%, believe the Second Coming will occur in their lifetime. Then again, 39% say they *do not believe* he will come in *their lifetime*. Opinion is equally divided on whether things will get better or worse before he returns; 34% think things will get worse, while 37% don't know one way or the other.

(<http://www.pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Many-Americans-Uneasy-with-Mix-of-Religion-and-Politics.aspx>)

"The saintly Presbyterian pastor Robert Murray McChesney sometimes asked people 'Do you believe that Jesus is coming today?' If they replied in the negative, he would say, 'Then you had better be ready, for He is coming at an hour when you think not!'" (Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1: 222).

For Discussion

The return of the Lord was the topic under discussion in your last home group meeting. During the discussion one member remarked, "My grandfather was a Christian who believed throughout his life that Jesus would return. My father was a Christian who believed throughout his life that Jesus would return. I'm a Christian who throughout my life has believed that Jesus would return. Obviously he hasn't—not yet anyway. I suppose I still believe, but I can't say I'm really watching for him and sure hope he doesn't come today."

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Luke 12:35-40

35 "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 37 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. 39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (NIV(c)1984)

Cf. another translation

12:35 "Get dressed for service and keep your lamps burning; 12:36 be like people waiting for their master to come back from the wedding celebration, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 12:37 Blessed are those slaves whom their master finds alert when he returns! I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, have them take their place at the table, and will come and wait on them! 12:38 Even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night and finds them alert, blessed are those slaves! 12:39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 12:40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (the NET Bible)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline "be dressed" and "keep . . . burning" in v. 35.
- * Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 36.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 36.
- * Bracket "I tell you the truth" in v. 37.
- * Highlight "it will be good for" in vv. 37, 38.
- * Number the things the "master" will do for his "watching" servants in v. 37.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 39.
- * Circle "must be ready" in v. 40.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 40.
- * Circle "Son of Man" in v. 40.

day

2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. To whom is Jesus talking in Luke 12:35-40? (Cf., vv. 1, 13, 22, 41, 54)

2. What can we infer about Jesus from what he tells his hearers in verses 35-40?

3. Explain the *comparison* introduced in verse 36.

4. What does the adverb "immediately" contribute to the sense of verses 35 and 36?

5. Why will it be good for those servants Jesus finds watching when he comes?

6. What does verse 38 imply regarding the servants' wait for their master's return?

7. What difference does that make?

8. What is the point of the parabolic saying in verse 39?

9. What do the thief and the Son of Man have in common?

10. **Discussion:** Talk about how to remain vigilant and always ready for the Lord's return.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Canadian weddings are much like American weddings, but Canadian wedding receptions are a different story. Canadian wedding receptions are notoriously long affairs. No one in attendance ever knows when it will end—something I learned for myself the hard way. Ruth and I went to a Canadian wedding not long after we moved to British Columbia. The young bride and groom, who had gone to the university where I worked, invited the entire Student Life team to attend, and since we didn't know the couple that well, we decided to go with my secretary who knew them better. That proved to be a big mistake. We had to stay through the whole thing. The wedding took place early one Saturday afternoon. After the ceremony at the church, the couple went to have their pictures made while we guests made our way to a nearby hall where the reception was going to be held. The bride and groom arrived later, much later around dinnertime. This worked out fine because I discovered that a complete meal is served at most Canadian wedding receptions. By the time we had finished eating, it was nearly 7:00 p.m., and I thought the celebration was about over.

Little did I know that things were just getting rolling. The best man/emcee returned to talk about the couple and joke with the guests. Then one by one he invited a seemingly endless number of family and friends to reminisce about the bride and groom, after which their fathers made toasts to both of them. This was followed by slide show biographies of the bride and groom that included pictures of them as infants (sometimes naked, of course), toddlers, elementary school children, and high school graduates. Then there were the pictures of the two of them together. Open mike time followed. Guests were invited to talk about the couple, sing songs about them, and recite poems about them. Unfortunately many did. The groom's cake was cut. Then the bride's cake was cut. There was more eating and drinking. A band played; people danced. Finally, the bride tossed her garter, then her bouquet. It was nearly midnight. My point is simple. If you ever go to a Canadian wedding reception, no telling when you'll return home.

Jewish weddings included festivities that often lasted a long time—even for days. The wedding involved dressing up. The bride was literally

adorned like a queen. She was bathed and her hair was braided with as many precious stones as the family possessed or could borrow. The girls who dressed her accompanied her as companions. The groom was dressed in finery and jewelry, too, and was accompanied by the friend of the bridegroom. The bride and groom looked and acted like a king and queen. The wedding also involved a procession. At an unannounced time the bridegroom accompanied by his friends proceeded from his home to fetch his bride from her parents' home. Then they all set out from his bride's home to the couple's new home where the wedding feast was held. Wedding guests holding oil lamps would light their way home singing and making music as they went. When they all arrived at the house, the couple entered under a canopy where they presided over an extended celebration, which included plenty to eat and drink. During the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus provided one hundred twenty gallons of wine for the guests, but they had already drunk so much that the person in charge thought it was a pity that the excellent new wine should have been left to the end when the people could not appreciate it (Jn. 2:6-10). During the festivities, God's blessing was asked upon the couple, which might be one reason why Jesus was invited to attend the wedding in Galilee (Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, 66-69; Miriam Feinberg Vamosh, *Daily Life at the Time of Jesus*, 58).

The unpredictable timing of events made the wedding banquet a good illustration of the unpredictable nature of our Lord's return. Jesus told his disciples, "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him" (Lk 12:35). The master in Jesus' parable was clearly a wealthy person living in a spacious home with a courtyard. When he left for the wedding, a servant presumably locked the door to the house behind him; when he returned, a servant would have to unlock it from inside for him to enter. On one hand, if his servants got tired of waiting, if they neglected their lamps, they would not be able to open the door "immediately" upon his arrival. On the other, if they kept an eye out for their master as diligently as a homeowner keeps an

eye out for a thief, they would be Johnny-on-the-spot, and what's more, they would be blessed. According to verse 37, their master will serve them! "He will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them." The point of the parable is impossible to miss. Since we do not

know exactly when our Lord will return, we must remain watchful and faithful. This especially true as years go by, since as time passes we run the risk of becoming complacent. Belief is one thing, readiness quite another.

The Message of the Passage

Since we don't know when the Son of Man will come, we must remain vigilant and always ready for his return.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

- Write about what God wants you to know . . .

- Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

- Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“Leave a Light On”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

- v. 35 **dressed** Loose fitting garments were tucked under a belt to prepare for work or travel. "The Greek perfect imperative implies a constant state of readiness, a readiness that once taken up, is to remain in place. The Old Testament provides the background of the image (Ex. 12:10; 1 Kings 18:46; 2 Kings 4:29; Isa. 59:17)" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 355).
- v. 35 **lamps burning** "That is, they must be on the constant watch, even in the midst of the darkness of the night. This exhortation shares the same imperative as the previous image, so this preparation is constant as well" (355).
- v. 36 **wedding banquet** The feast following a Jewish wedding did not begin at a set time and no one knew when it would end. Its uncertain length made it impossible to know when the guests would return home.
- vv. 37, 38 **it will be good** Lit., "blessed" (cf., NKJV, ESV, NRSV, the NET Bible). "The repetition of the benediction emphasizes how truly blessed those faithful servants will be" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 360).
- v. 37 **I tell you the truth** Cf., "truly" (ESV); "assuredly" (NKJV); "in truth I tell you" (NJB). "The NIV's phrase gives the sense of the Greek (literally *Amen*)" (360).
- v. 37 **dress himself** "As always, Jesus' images carry a twist. Here the twist is that the master, on finding the house well cared for, turns around and serves the servants. This is the blessing he holds out to them" (Bock, 355).
- v. 37 **recline . . .** "Among simple folk, people sat on the floor or on mats to take their meals, helping themselves to food placed in the center. But in a wealthy household, or at a festive meal, the guests reclined on a three-sided divan, and the food would be brought by servants from side rooms. The host was seated second from the left facing the open side of the table, with places of honor (Luke 14:7) reserved on either side of him (Matthew 20:21)" (Vamosh, 60).
- v. 38 **second, third watch** I.e., the last two of the three watches into which the Jews divided the night. If he was referring to the Jewish system of three watches (6-10, 10-2, 2-6), then the time would be around 2:00 a.m. If, perhaps, he was referring to the Roman system of four watches (6-9, 9-12, 12-3, 3-6), then the time would be around midnight (360). In any case, the banquet, which began during the first watch, continued long into the night.
- v. 40 **also** This verse contains an implied *comparison*. The Gk. word [*kai*] could be translated "as well" or "likewise" in this context.
- v. 40 **Son of Man** Jesus frequently referred to himself using this title. It should be understood in light of the OT reference to "one like a son of man . . . given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Dan 7:13-14).

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
 Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

"Ready or not, here I come..." Remember these familiar words from the all-time favorite game, Hide and Seek? If your family is like mine you have played it countless time and in countless variations. In our parable this week Jesus tells us to be ready for His coming. In the game Hide and Seek, the goal is to be still and quiet as the seeker is looking for you. In real life, we are to be seeking Him as we are waiting for the Savior's return. In the busyness of spring, take time for a "spiritual checkup" with your family. Are you still praying together as a family? Are you having family devotions? Are you helping your kids develop their own spiritual disciplines, like Bible study and scripture memory? Plan a special time this week to sit down and find out where everyone is spiritually. Ask simple questions like, "How would you describe your friendship with Jesus right now?" or "On a scale of one to ten, how close do you feel to Jesus right now?" Close your family meeting with a fun game of Hide and Seek!

Variations on Hide and Seek: Play in the dark with flashlights, have one person hide and everyone else looks for him, or the person who gets caught by the seeker must perform a silly stunt.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Luke 12:35-40
 Watching Servants

- *How many times is "(be) ready" used in the passage?
- *Who took care of the owner's house while he was away?
- *Who is the " Son of Man"?

What Do You Think

- *What are everyday situations you need to "be ready" for?
- *What can keep you from focusing on Jesus?
- *Why do we need to "be ready" for Jesus?

What R U Going To Do

Psalms 25:4-5 is a great prayer to help you always "be ready."
 Write it out on cards and hide them in surprising places throughout the house.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Eternity - I believe in heaven, hell and one day Jesus will come again.

Memory Verse

Psalm 25:4-5 Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** ____ **Think** ____ **Do** ____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

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CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Keith Smith (B.A. in Speech Communication, Texas Tech University and M.A. in Religious Education, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the Family and Children's Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. Keith speaks at children/student camps across the country. He has developed a number of relational parenting seminars designed to motivate parents to empower their parenting by emotionally connecting with their kids. Keith lives with his wife, Denise, and their two children, Jordan and Alex.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.