

Growing Christians Need to be Ready for Jesus' Second Coming
Message 3 of 3 in the series: "Growing Up"

A. Shortly before he died, Peter wrote an open letter to believers everywhere reminding us to keep growing in our faith so we can live useful and productive lives.

"This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have... May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord... **The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be** in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:1a, 2, & 8 (NLT)

B. We need to keep growing in our faith so false teachers won't be able to lead us astray.

"But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as **there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies** and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. **Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality.** And because of these teachers, **the way of truth will be slandered.** In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money." 2 Peter 2:1-3a (NLT)

C. We need to keep growing in our faith so we will be ready for Jesus' second coming.

"This is my second letter to you, dear friends, and in both of them I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory. **I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles.**" 2 Peter 3:1-2 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! The Bible is our guide in all matters of faith and practice, including preparing our hearts and minds for Jesus' return. "What sorrow awaits you who say, 'If only the day of the Lord were here!' **You have no idea what you are wishing for.**" Amos 5:18a (NLT)

1. In the last days, scoffers will come. "Most importantly, I want to remind you that **in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires.** They will say, 'What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.' **They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command,** and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. **Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood.** And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. **They are being kept for the day of judgment,** when ungodly people will be destroyed." 2 Peter 3:3-7 (NLT)
 - We are living in the last days. "And **many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. Sin will be rampant everywhere,** and the love of many will grow cold."
Matthew 24:11-12 (NLT)
 - Scoffers mock the Bible's teaching about sin, Judgement Day, and salvation through Jesus because they like following their own evil desires and don't want to repent. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but **people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.**" John 3:16-20 (NIV)
2. Jesus hasn't returned yet because He doesn't view time the same way we do. "But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: **A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.**" 2 Peter 3:8 (NLT) (See also Psalm 90:4)
3. Jesus hasn't returned yet because He's patiently waiting for more people to repent. "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, **he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.**"
2 Peter 3:9 (NLT) (See also Ezekiel 18:23)
4. Jesus will return unexpectedly. "But **the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief.** Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment." 2 Peter 3:10 (NLT)

- Peter urgently warned us that Jesus will return suddenly and unexpectedly because that's what Jesus said. "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. So you, too, must keep watch! **For you don't know what day your Lord is coming. Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.**" Matthew 24:37-44 (NLT)
5. Now that we know these things about Jesus' second coming, we should do everything we can to hurry it along. **"Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along.** On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness. And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, **make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight.**" 2 Peter 3:11-14 (NLT)
- We can hurry along Jesus' second coming by living godly lives. **"Live such good lives among the pagans** that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." 1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)
 - We can hurry along Jesus' second coming by completing the mission He gave us. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And **you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**" Acts 1:8 (NLT) "And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14 (NLT)
 - One day God will replace our decaying planet with a new heaven and a new earth where we will live with Him forever. "Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, **the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.**" Romans 8:20-21 (NLT) "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared... I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, 'Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. **God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.**' And the one sitting on the throne said, 'Look, I am making everything new!' And then he said to me, 'Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.'" Revelation 21:1a & 3-5 (NLT)
6. Now that we know these things about Jesus' second coming, we must be on guard. **"So be on guard;** then you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. **Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen." 2 Peter 3:17b-18 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

Read 2 Peter 3 and then discuss the following questions:

1. Why do you think Peter was so insistent that we keep growing in our faith and knowledge of the Lord? What happens if we do? What happens if we don't? (2 Peter 1:8 & 3:17-18)
2. Read Matthew 24:11-12, 1 Timothy 4:1-2, & 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Do you believe we are living in the last days before Jesus returns? Why/Why not?
3. What motivates scoffers to mock the Bible and deliberately reject what it says? (John 3:16-21)
4. How would you answer a skeptical coworker who asks you why Jesus is taking so long to come back? (2 Peter 3:8-9, Psalm 90:4)

5. What preparations have you made to keep thieves out of your house/apartment? How would your preparations change if you knew a thief was planning to break in at 2:00am tomorrow? Why do you think Peter compared Jesus' second coming to a thief breaking in? (2 Peter 3:10, Matthew 24:37-44)
6. How can we hurry Jesus' second coming along? (1 Peter 2:12, 2 Peter 3:11-12, Acts 1:8, Matthew 24:14)
7. How does it make you feel to learn that we will spend eternity with God in a brand-new Heaven and Earth that is free of sin, sickness, death, and sadness? Why is it necessary for God to destroy our world as it exists now? (2 Peter 3:13-14, Romans 8:20-21, Revelation 21:1 & 3-5)