

WHY? A Resource Kit for Talking to Teens about Disaster, Relief, & Restoration

What's He Waiting For?

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Core Text: 2 Peter 3:9-15

Core Visual/Illustration: A family tree (preferably of a Christian family, perhaps that of the leader). (The farther back it goes the better). Talk a bit about family trees – how far back can students trace their own ancestors? (Note: This can be difficult for some youth. The point here is not in how far back one can recall, but in leading students to know that God has been at work in the whole family of God for thousands of years).

Major Teaching Points:

Teaching Point #1

Christ's Return Has Been Promised. Throughout the New Testament we are told that Christ is about to return (Romans 13:11-13; James 5:8-9; 1 Peter 4:7). Throughout Scripture we are told of a coming day of judgment (Psalm 1:5; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Isaiah 66:16 Matthew 11:24; 1 Corinthians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 6:2). We confess our faith in the return of Christ in all three ecumenical creeds (Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian). In light of His coming, we are encouraged to pray for His return (Lord's Prayer "Thy Kingdom come"; Revelation 22:20). We see signs of the end of the world (Matthew 24:3-8) in the wars and earthquakes, tsunamis and hurricanes.

Teaching Point #2

We often wonder when He will return. All the signs seem to suggest that the end is near. Why hasn't He come back yet? For some reason, God does not seem to be in any big rush. It has been almost 2000 years and we are still waiting for Him to return.

Teaching Point #3

No one knows the time of that day (Christ's return) except the Father (Matthew 24:36). This is both comforting and frustrating. It is frustrating because we want to know. Since Adam and Eve, we have been in search of the mind of God. We wonder, "What's He waiting for?"

Teaching Point #4

Christ's delay is a merciful delay. This is where the text (2 Peter 3:9-15) comes in. Verse nine says, "He is not slow in keeping his promises, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." And verse 15 says, "Our Lord's patience means salvation." He delays His return so that more people can be saved. These people include non-Christians alive today who have not heard the Gospel. These people also include all the people who have not yet been born. [This is where the family tree comes in.] Had Christ returned a generation ago, none of us would be with Him in heaven because we would not have been created. Had He returned 4 generations ago, none of our grandparents would have been created, and therefore they would not spend eternity with him.

A look at a family tree (especially of a Christian family) shows how many people come to salvation because God waits to return. God's patience means salvation – for you and for me. I have often prayed that God would return and take us to heaven to be with Him, but I am so glad that He did not answer that prayer before my 11 month old daughter was born last October. I'm thankful that He waited for her, and that He has waited these 2000 years for us. It is comforting to know that He will

continue to wait until all those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life have come to know Him (Daniel 12:1; Revelation 21:27).

Teaching Point #5

The reality of Christ's certain return affects the way we live. His delay should not lead us to complacency (Romans 13:12-13; Hebrews 10:24-25). It should rather excite in us a life of hope (Titus 2:12-14; Hebrews 6:19), a life of service to others (1 Peter 4:7-10), a putting off of sin (Romans 13:8-14), and zeal in reaching out to others with the Gospel message (1 Peter 2:9-10, 3:15).

Teaching Point #6

We live in the end times. Events such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and tsunamis are indeed signs of the end. Jesus really is coming back soon (Acts 1:11) – and that is a good thing. Despite the fact that some things in Revelation appear frightening, the message of the book of Revelation is one of victory for God's people. The end of the world is nothing to fear, but rather something to anticipate eagerly, for the victory has already been won by Christ in his death and resurrection.

Questions/Discussion Starters for Youth:

1. For what reasons is Jesus waiting so long to come back and judge the world? Why does it seem that He allows so much wickedness to go un-judged?
2. Are events like tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, and war around the world signs that the world is about to end? Should natural disasters be seen as God's judgment on certain places? If so, what about the faithful people who live in these places?
3. Is it wrong to be afraid of the end of the world? What causes us to fear the end of the world? How does our faith in Christ dispel such fears?
4. Why is it that so many movies portray events that could cause the world to end (e.g. Armageddon, Deep Impact, The Day After Tomorrow)? Why are the Left Behind books so popular? What does this fascination with world destruction tell us about our society? How might these books/movies provide avenues for witness to non-Christians?
5. What does a life of active hope look like? How would my life be different if I lived every day expecting Jesus to return? What makes it hard to live this way?