

ADULT STUDY GUIDE

This is the adult component of the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum. This piece follows the **same scope and sequence** as the other levels: **Early Childhood, Elementary, and Youth**. This alignment presents some amazing opportunities.

- First of all, it helps all ages speak a **common theological language**.
- Second, it helps God’s people build an understanding of the **lifelong nature of learning God’s Word**—that we don’t just learn the narratives once or twice before moving on to other matters.
- Third, and critical to this curriculum, it helps **equip households** to teach the faith at home.

If parents and other adults spend time meditating and discussing the narratives of the Bible while the younger generations in the congregation study the same narratives, then there will be greater opportunity throughout the week to **reflect together** upon what the narrative says and what it means. In other words, studying the narratives of the Bible as adults is a blessing in and of itself, but it also helps **equip parents and faith leaders** to be more confident and feel empowered to extend those conversations into the household.

FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

This study guide is meant to provide some guidelines and springboards for discussion in your Bible study groups.

- The **first page** of each lesson provides the central focus statements, not only for the Adult level, but also for the other levels. Use this as a way to orient yourself to the **main themes and goals** of the lessons across all levels. You’ll also find helpful **tips for preparation**.
- The **middle two pages** begin with an introductory “**Launch**” section, which provides prompts for beginning the study and an open-ended reflection question to kick off group discussion. The following “**Learn & Live**” section breaks down the text into three to five narrative sections. Each one of these sections has some additional commentary, a reflection question, and some helps to better understand possible answers to the reflection question. The “**Leave**” section provides prompts for a final reflection question and some other considerations to close the lesson. The **sidebars** include leader tips and bonus activities to help you think through options for extending the lesson.
- The **final page** of each lesson is the student piece. Copy one lesson handout per learner, and distribute this at the beginning of class.

TIPS FOR USE

This study guide is designed primarily to help give you, the leader, some thoughts and prompts to help guide and assist facilitation of the class. Below are some tips for how to use it.

- This is meant to be a Bible study, so each learner will need access to a Bible. Encourage your learners to bring their own to class.
- Don’t neglect the lesson handout. The primary reason for this page is to create some space for each learner to reflect and engage the questions on his or her own. Often, any given group will have one or two vocal learners and others who may not speak up. Consider using techniques to help engage all learners in the process, such as having each learner write down his or her reflection privately before sharing, having each learner share with a partner before opening up discussion, or changing the seating arrangements to create small groups.
- Use the opening reflection question as a time to build community. Adult learners, generally speaking, desire to share their experience with one another, and this lesson starter provides an opportunity for this.
- For each narrative section, ask volunteers to read the text aloud while the rest follow along. Don’t force anyone; adults, like children and youth, may be self-conscious about their reading or public speaking ability.
- Download the Enduring Faith Page from the online digital resource center and hand out copies to your learners. Near the end of the lesson, talk through the prompts, which help the learners extend the lessons in their households throughout the week. Encourage learners to take this page home along with the lesson handout to be used throughout the week.

THE LAST CALL

Jesus Will Return
Matthew 25:31–46;
Revelation 22:6–21
AD 95

BIBLE TRUTH

Jesus will come again.

LEARNER GOAL

I can connect Scripture texts about Jesus' return to my identity and daily calling as His redeemed child today.

BIBLE VERSE

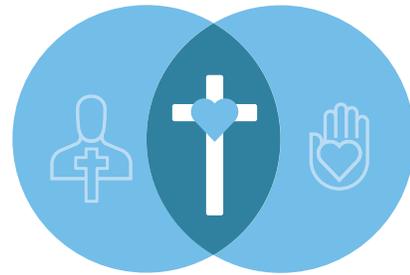
[He] will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body. Philippians 3:21

LAW & GOSPEL

In sin, I trust my own works to save me. **Christ reveals His second coming and assures me of His work in salvation.**

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Jesus describes His second coming, when the Father will separate believers and unbelievers. He tells how the faithful, by faith, fulfill God's will, and how the unfaithful will find themselves banished to eternal punishment. John records the words of the risen and glorified Christ in the last chapter of his revelation. There, Christ promises once again to return and gather all believers to Himself: "Surely I am coming soon" (Revelation 22:20).



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

Christ promises to return one day to take me to be with Him forever.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can share Christ's promise as I wait faithfully for His return.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can connect Scripture texts about Jesus' return to my identity and daily calling as His redeemed child today.

YOUTH

I can describe from the text what it means for me that Jesus will come again.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that Jesus will come again.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know it will be a wonderful day when Jesus comes back again.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

MORE TIME Read the Third Article (Part 3) in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)*.

IN DEPTH Read **Matthew 24** with study notes and the articles on page 2237 in *TLSB*.



LEADER NOTE

Possibilities include natural disasters, disease, monsters, or supernatural terrors. Challenge your learners to brainstorm and have some fun with this in small groups. The point is to help them highlight what fears and insecurities each one of these doomsday scenarios elicits in us. Direct them then to the text of the day, this final lesson in the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum, where they will look at Jesus' teaching on the end of the world and how reality as we know it will actually end at His return. Remind them that the Christian perspective is a hopeful one for God's people, not a despairing one.



BONUS ACTIVITY

There are many similarities between Matthew 25 and Matthew 10 that will likely help clarify some details in Matthew 25. Consider, if you have time, reading through or skimming **Matthew 10** together, comparing it to Matthew 25. God uses His Gospel messengers as His representatives.

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

OPENING REFLECTION

What are some of the “end of the world” scenarios we see in movies or the media? What fears and uncertainties do these different scenarios highlight?

LEARN & LIVE

MATTHEW 25:31–46

BIBLE COMMENTARY

In this teaching (it is not a parable, as the common title of “the parable of the sheep and the goats” would suggest), we get a picture of Jesus’ return on the Last Day. He is Christ, glorified and returned, coming to judge the living and the dead. There are three groups of people identified here, two from the nations whom He divides into two groups like a shepherd would divide sheep and goats, and a third implied group Jesus identifies as His “brothers.” The wording of the people as being gathered from “all the nations” hearkens to Jesus’ final instruction, what we call the Great Commission, to His disciples, whom He sends into the nations to preach the Gospel. Who are the “brothers”? It is common in the Church today to interpret this whole section as a message of social care for the needy, which on other occasions Jesus does emphasize. Here within the context of Matthew, however, the term “brothers” refers to fellow believers (5:22–24), or more pointedly the disciples whom Jesus sends to preach the Gospel (28:10). Earlier in the Book of Matthew, Jesus had sent out the Twelve to preach the Gospel in His place, and those who rejected the message were to be treated as those who had rejected Christ (ch. 10). Together, these insights paint a different picture than a warning for social ministry. Instead, Jesus is showing how, when He returns, those who rejected the message of His preachers, teachers, and missionaries will be treated as if they rejected Him, while those who supported His messengers will be commended as those who took care of Him. This should give the Church great encouragement and urgency as we do the work Christ has sent us to do for the nations. We eagerly await and look for Christ’s return, the resurrection of the dead, and the amazing life of the world to come.

REFLECTION QUESTION

With the understanding that the “brothers” mentioned in this section refer to those whom Christ has sent into the world to proclaim the Gospel as His representatives, what hope and encouragement does this teaching give to the Church as we await the return of Christ?

REFLECTION HELPS

Jesus has sent out His people, especially pastors and missionaries, with the task of proclaiming the Gospel. We know, however, that some will hear, receive the messengers, and believe, while others will reject the messengers and the message. God’s sent people proclaim the Word knowing that it is Jesus at work, not our own power, and when Jesus returns it will be revealed to all that those who preached the Gospel did so in Christ’s place. This is a great hope for Christians who suffer persecution, and an encouragement for God’s people to continue to support those who preach the Gospel in all circumstances until the day when Christ returns.

REVELATION 22:6–9

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Here we now skip ahead some five or six decades in time from the words of Jesus in Matthew to Jesus' final message to John in the Book of Revelation. This section is part of a kind of epilogue. God had already granted John a vision of the return of Christ and the restoration of all things in the new creation. Here, both directly and through His messenger angel, Jesus caps off the revelation with some instructions and warnings. With poignant effect, Jesus sums up the narrative of Scripture, connecting the work of the prophets of old and the present work of the angels to the service of Christ, who will return to make all things new. Though for a moment John is overwhelmed by the angel's presence, the angel points John, and by extension the whole Church Militant, to look to Christ alone, the Word alone, and God's grace alone for our hope.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What do we see in this section about the work God has given His agents to do until Christ returns? Is there anything surprising to you here? Why or why not?

REFLECTION HELPS

God's agents, both human and angelic, are to keep and uphold the Word of God until Christ returns. John was tempted in the moment to give undue honor to the angelic messenger, and the angel points him to honor Christ alone. We humans serve the same God and have the same hope as the angels.

REVELATION 22:10–21

BIBLE COMMENTARY

For these last verses of the Bible, we are challenged to consider the urgency of the mission of the Church and the ending of the age. We are to act like each day is our last, looking to Christ. He will come with His recompense or reward for His people and judgment for those who have rejected His Word. In the meantime, His people are to remember and cling to our Baptism (washed robes), hold to and never alter His Word, and look to the day when we eat of the tree of life. Jesus uses many of His titles for Himself, not only tying together the Old and New Testaments but also once again making Himself equal to the Father. He ends with inviting the Church to boldly pray for His return.

REFLECTION QUESTION

How does this section challenge us to consider the return of Christ as imminent and an urgent matter in our lives? Look for details. Then, consider what factors and temptations keep us from maintaining this urgent perspective on Christ's return and what we can do to maintain that perspective.

REFLECTION HELPS

Details include Jesus coming soon and entering into the city, the mention of the tree of life, Jesus' talk of recompense, and His command to pray for His return. Since it has been a long time, it's easy to feel like Jesus' return is not imminent. He could return any day, though, and we are to live like each day could be our last, trusting in His mercy and grace always.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

Connect insights from the Scripture texts about Jesus' return to your identity and daily calling as His redeemed child today.

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Pages.

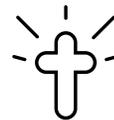
CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray as you prepare to leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

The topic of the resurrection of the dead is critical to our Christian faith, yet it is often overlooked or misunderstood. If you have time, consider looking over or pointing your learners to investigate the Third Article (Part 3) in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2017) for more insight into this future hope. If you don't have time in class, challenge them to look this over on their own outside of class.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ has won victory over death by the cross and will return to raise the dead and make all things new for His people.



LEADER NOTE

God's people are to live each day looking to Jesus' return, clinging to His Word and promises, not getting distracted, and supporting the work of those who proclaim His Word to us in His stead.

