**1. Motivate**

A video introduction is available. View at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_9f6q43mg> If you have no
wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/k92befju>

When have you been caught unprepared?

* a pop quiz in school
* forgot an appointment
* no valentine ready for spouse
* didn’t do Christmas shopping until Christmas eve
* making cookies and didn’t have one of the ingredients
* visitors showed up and I had not cleaned the house
* client showed up and I had not finished the report
* forget to renew the car safety inspection and yearly license
* went to mow the lawn and there was no gas for the mower
* forgot my wallet – couldn’t pay for groceries

**2. Transition**

We have been studying Christ’s teachings on being ready for His return.

* We need to be anticipating that event and be prepared.
* We can prepare by growing in Christ as we wait.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Prepare for Christ’s Return

Listen for a contrast.

Matthew 25:1-5 (NIV) "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

What is meant by “kingdom of heaven”?

* similar to the phrase “kingdom of God”
* the Kingdom of God is the realm where God rules
* He wants to rule in your life as you submit to Him
* when He rules in your life, you will be ready and prepared for His return

To what is the kingdom likened?

* a situation where some are ready, and some are unprepared
* it was a Jewish wedding where the bridesmaids were supposed to light the way of a procession with their lamps

How were the two groups of five maidens differentiated? What made one group foolish and the other group wise?

* half the group had come prepared by having enough oil for their lamps
* the other half ran out of oil when the bridegroom was delayed
* they did not have oil to deal with the extra time

Since the wedding party was delayed, what did the ten maidens do while they were waiting?

* it was late
* they were drowsy
* they fell asleep as they waited

What makes it difficult to be diligent as we wait for Christ’s return? Why do we tend to think (and act like) we have all the time in the world to get ready for Christ’s return?

* we believe that His return is imminent
* it’s been 2000 years
* hard to keep up the attitude and motivation of anticipation after all that time
* makes us feel there is a lot of time to prepare our lives for His return
* we’ve got plenty of time to go about tasks such as discipling, evangelization

What are some disciplines that can help prepare us for Christ’s return?

* daily Bible study
* daily praise, thanksgiving, intercessory prayer
* regular corporate worship
* involvement in church ministries
* give, pray, send to missions outreach
* witness to friends and family who are *not* ready for Christ’s return

What responsibility does each Christian have before God as we anticipate Christ’s return?

* daily communication with the Lord
* submission to God’s will, obedience
* allow Jesus to be on the “throne” of your life
* listen when God speaks to you through His Word

Why is continual preparation for Christ’s return better than "last minute cramming"?

* like any other responsibility that requires study or preparation
* when you do lots of smaller incremental preparation, you end up covering all aspects of the task
* you think of details that you would miss if you try to get it all done right before it is due

3.2 Personal Responsibility to Prepare

Listen for the bridesmaids’ problem.

Matthew 25:6-9 (NIV) "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' 7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 9 "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

What announcement awakened the maidens from their sleep?

* the delay was over
* the bridegroom showed up in the middle of the night
* time to lead the procession with the lamps, get up and get going

In what way did the foolishness of the five catch up to them?

* lamps were down to the last drops of oil or were out
* they had neglected to have extra fuel for the lamps
* asked the others to share their oil

Why did the five wise maidens refuse them?

* when they asked the others to share with them, they were refused
* the wise bridesmaids had sufficient for themselves, but were unable to share lest they all be without
* suggested they go buy more
* not easy to find a supply late at night, probably no 24/7 general stores around

What do these verses teach us about the need for individual readiness?

* responsibility to be ready for Christ’s return is ours alone
* we have the church, the body of believers to minister to each other
* but ultimately, the responsibility to have one’s life prepared for Jesus’ return is a personal decision
* we must make wise choices how we spend our time, talents, and treasures

What are our personal responsibilities when it comes to preparing for Christ’s return?

* be in an up-to-date relationship with Jesus
* daily submission to Christ, daily trust and obedience
* involvement in the Kingdom of God, in church ministries

What are the possible consequences of putting off thinking about Christ and spiritual growth until later?

* putting off an initial profession of faith means being left behind
* putting off daily obedience, daily communication with God would mean shame and sorrow at what could have, would have, should have been
* others might not benefit from ministries you should have been involved in

3.3 Preparation Time Is Limited

Listen for a sobering story end.

Matthew 25:10-13 (NIV) "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. 11 "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' 12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' 13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

What happened when the foolish maidens went to try to buy oil?

* not a good time of day to purchase oil
* oil vendors not nearby, not open
* may have had to knock on several doors

What was the terse and pointed reply they received when they returned?

* who are you, anyway?
* we don’t know you
* go away
* you missed your opportunity

How does the story illustrate the declaration of verse 13?

* one group was ready, others were not
* we don’t know when Christ will return
* need to always be ready
* daily live should be lived in anticipation of Christ’s return

What are the consequences of not being prepared for Christ’s return? What are dangers of putting off thinking about Christ and spiritual growth until later?

* putting off an initial profession of faith means being left behind
* putting off daily obedience, daily communication with God would mean shame and sorrow at what could have, would have, should have been
* others might not benefit from ministries you should have been involved in

Why can preaching a gospel of second chances be misleading?

* it is true that God is merciful, He doesn’t execute the judgment we deserve
* we say that God will welcome anyone who comes in repentance, confession, and faith in Jesus’ work of salvation
* our past is forgiven
* but there *will* come a point in time where there are no more second chances
* Christ’s return will separate the believers from the unbelievers

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Realize:

* Ask God to reveal to you areas of your relationship with Him that need improvement.
* Make those areas a priority in your daily walk with the Lord.

Memorize:

* Memorize Matthew 25:13, “Therefore be alert, because you don’t know either the day or the hour.”
* Let that be a positive motivation for practical preparation.

Exercise:

* We can’t change the past, but we can make plans to use our time properly.
* What non-essential habit or activity can you eliminate from your schedule and replace with an activity that prepares you for Christ’s return?



Double Puzzle

Hello, Central? We have some sort of secret message intercepted from the Prifrinited embassy. Spiros the Spy and the Word Ninja are stumped. Can your people unscramble the words at the left (which come from the Bible Study passage) and use the numbers to determine the letters in the message below? The bass guitarist from the worship team is waiting for the message. Technical assistance found at <https://tinyurl.com/k92befju>

