**1. Motivate**

When have you seen for yourself that “timing is everything”?

* a trick football play
* putting together a big fancy dinner
* getting the whole family out the door on the way to church
* buying and selling stock

A video introduction is available. View at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_34sbwi7f> If you have no wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/2p8am4dk>

* beating the rush hour traffic
* telling a good joke
* hitting a series of green lights through town
* breaking the board with a karate hit or kick
* getting kids to school before they get counted late

**2. Transition**

Sometimes we wish we knew the timing of Jesus’ return.

* We do know that Jesus *is* certain to return even though we don’t know exactly when.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Watch for the Signs

Listen for what is near.

Matthew 24:32-33 (NIV) "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 33 Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.

What changes in nature do you tend to notice?

* when the leaves start to turn in color in the fall
* when the leaves start to come out on trees and bushes in the spring
* when the various flowering bushes begin to bloom
* when certain migrating birds start to come through either going north or south
* trying to tell if the ground hog gets the prediction correct

What lesson did Jesus teach through the parable of a fig tree budding?

* when the twigs get tender
* when the leaves come out
* then you know summer is near – fig trees are one of the last plants to bud in the spring

The word “near” can mean physical distance or soon in time … which do you think Jesus is meaning here? Why?

* time seems more likely
* the context of the fig tree budding and summer coming

So, what is the “it” that is near, right at the door in verse 33?

* may be two prophecies here – temple destruction 70AD and Jesus’ return
* events previously described have already taken place
* nothing much more must happen before He returns
* only a few things yet to take place
* maybe only the advance of the gospel to the few remaining people groups

To what do “these things” refer?

* Jesus compared this spring phenomenon of the fig tree to His coming
* when events like He has been noting happen, you know his coming is near
* you know it is “right at the door”

The Lord accentuated this point using a common image—at the door.

* Jesus told the church in Laodicea (Rev. 3:20), “I stand at the door and knock” (figuratively), asking to come in and dine with them.
* When someone hears a knock at the door, he or she knows someone is standing right outside, waiting to come inside.
* This word picture clearly emphasized the closeness of a coming event—in this instance, the return of Christ.

⇨ It’s normal for us to look for the signs of His coming and to listen for His knock.

3.2 Trust What God Tells You

Listen for Jesus’ authority.

Matthew 24:34-35 (NIV) I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Note the introductory phrase (KJV) “verily I say unto you”? How do other translations state this phrase? What are some ways we might make this kind of statement today?

* NIV says “I tell you the truth”
* a colloquial version, we might say, “I kid you not”
* or “Listen up”
* or “sit up and listen to what I say”
* or “pay attention, now”
* or “this is God’s Truth, pay attention”

Why do you think Jesus was getting their attention with this preface to what He is about to say?

* it was (still is) really important
* some of them might have been dozing
* some might still have been having their own whispered conversations
* Jesus didn’t want them to miss this

Jesus said, “*this generation* will not pass away until all *these things* have happened”. The generation represented by the disciples is long gone. So, what was Jesus talking about?

* remember the whole conversation started with the disciples remark about the temple and Jesus’ prophecy about its destruction
* the temple destruction occurred in 70 AD
* most of them would normally still be alive in less than 40 years

Jesus contrasts the demise of the temple with the permanence of His words … “my words will never pass away”.

* What Jesus says is eternally true, trustworthy, and authoritative to the fullest.
* Disciples of Jesus are to …
	+ submit to the authority of His word,
	+ live in conformity to His message, and
	+ teach it to others faithfully.

When has God’s Word proven true in your life?

* promises about prayer – God answers prayer
* promises about peace
* assurance about changing lives
* “by His stripes you are healed” … physical healing
* spiritual healing
* emotional healing

What are some reasons why is it important for us to trust God’s word?

* otherwise, we have no hope
* trusting God is the only real thing in this life we can cling to with certainty
* we have this hope as an anchor for our soul … otherwise we drift aimlessly
* His word is Truth
* don’t want to base your life on falsehoods

3.3 Timing of Christ’s Return

Listen for how it will be.

Matthew 24:36-41 (NIV) "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

According to Jesus, who does *not* know and who *definitely* knows when the end of time will come?

* people do not know
* angels do not know
* Jesus (as a human) did not know
* God the Father does know

What does this imply about Jesus’ limitations here on earth?

* Jesus gave up or limited Himself as a human
* He was not omnipresent as a human
* He was limited to time and space as we are
* He says He was not omniscient as a human – some revelations He spoke of were given to Him by God’s indwelling Holy Spirit
* He was not omnipotent as a human – miracles were performed by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit in His life
* He dealt with similar limitations as we do – but we have the same indwelling Holy Spirit as He did

What does the reference to the days of Noah mean?

* Noah had preached for many years that a flood was coming
* even though the world at that time had not experienced such a weather phenomenon
* people went on with life … working, raising families, living normal lives
* Noah believed and communicated what God had told him
* others didn’t, they went on with their lives in a state of unbelief

Why is that historical event an apt illustration of the coming of the Son of man?

* same today … life goes on
* Jesus promises His return … some people believe, some don’t … but life goes on
* when He does return, believers’ faith will be rewarded, unbelievers will be left

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

What is the point of the two mini-parables in verses 40-41?

* when Jesus returns some will be taken up, raptured
* some will be left
* people we know and work with … some are believers, some are not
* there will be a separation
* the basis of that separation will be one’s belief and faith in Jesus … not how good you performed or do your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds

How can our attitudes and actions express trust in God’s timing?

* live as if it could happen today
* work and minister as if it may be many years
* what you do and say should be with the thought in mind, “is this what I want to be found doing when Jesus comes?”

Application

Realize:

* Giving His followers signs to watch for regarding His return was a loving and gracious thing for Jesus to do.
* Spend a few moments in prayer thanking Him for His concern for you.

Memorize:

* Memorize Matthew 24:36,
* “Now concerning that day and hour no one knows—neither the angels of heaven nor the Son—except the Father alone.” Allow this truth to help you trust God with what you can never know.

React:

* We don’t know when Jesus will return, but we can do our best to be ready for His return.
* Make a list of things you need to do in order to prepare for Jesus’ return.



Double Puzzle



It is I, the Word Ninja. I’m busy with WORDLE, so I need your help. The words on the left are all scrambled. These words come from your Bible Study scripture (NIV) for this week. If you can figure out what the word is, you can use the numbers to determine the letters that go in the message. This is an important communication from your Middle School Coordinator. When you figure it out, pass it along to the chairman of your Missions Committee. Help and the ever-popular crossword is available at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8am4dk>