RE:TURN

The start of forever

What thoughts and feelings do you have when you think about Jesus re:turning, Heaven and eternity?

Is there anything that you would like to experience on this Earth before Jesus' re:turn?

Does having things you want to experience on this Earth, affect how you feel about Jesus' re:turn and your actions in preparation?

'Eternity starts now.'

John 5:24

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me ***has*** *eternal life and will not be judged but* ***has*** *crossed over from death to life.*

Whoever accepts Jesus and believes in Him **HAS** - not 'will have' - eternal life. We are adopted into God's Heavenly family and our Earthly identity is now changed to an eternal-life-with-God-in-Heaven identity.

? What are your thoughts on the idea that Heaven can start right now?

? What questions do you have about Jesus 2nd coming?

? What does it look like to be ready for it?

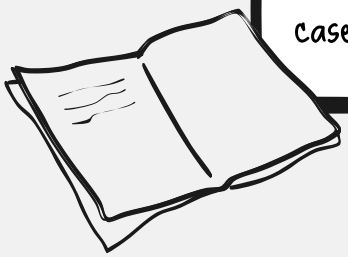
? How can we be ready for it if we don't know when it will happen?

? The 2nd coming is compared to pregnancy. What does that tell you about the last days? (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3)

Imagine this. You arrive home and your family say, "SURPRISE! We are going on a holiday but we can't tell you where. We leave in 10 minutes! Pack your things and we will be waiting in the car."

But what should you pack?! Where are you going? What will the weather be like? What activities will you do? How many undies should you take?

Knowing so few details, you have to pack for every possible circumstance. Now your case is stuffed and heavy and you have to lug around things you really don't need.



? What would make packing easier and less stressful, than having to overpack to be prepared for all 'just-in-case' situations?

? Do you think we can 'over pack' in our preparation for Jesus' 2nd coming? What could that look like?

Read **Matthew 25:1-13** and fill in the blanks for **V13**.

'Therefore keep _____, because you ____ _____ _____ the _____ or the _____.'

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:1-6** and fill in the blanks for **V2**.

'for you know very well that the _____ of the _____ will _____ like a _____in the _____.'

? Based on these 2 verses, when does Jesus **re:**turn?

? How is it possible that we can not know the time of Jesus' **re:**turn, but that we also will not be surprised?

Matthew 24, **Mark 13** and **Luke 21**, all tell about 'The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times'.

O Choose one of these chapters to read through and note down the signs listed that will happen before Jesus **re:**turns.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

? If we believe that Jesus will definitely come back to take us to Heaven, do you think that it is important to know the timeline of events leading up to His **re:**turn? Why / why not?

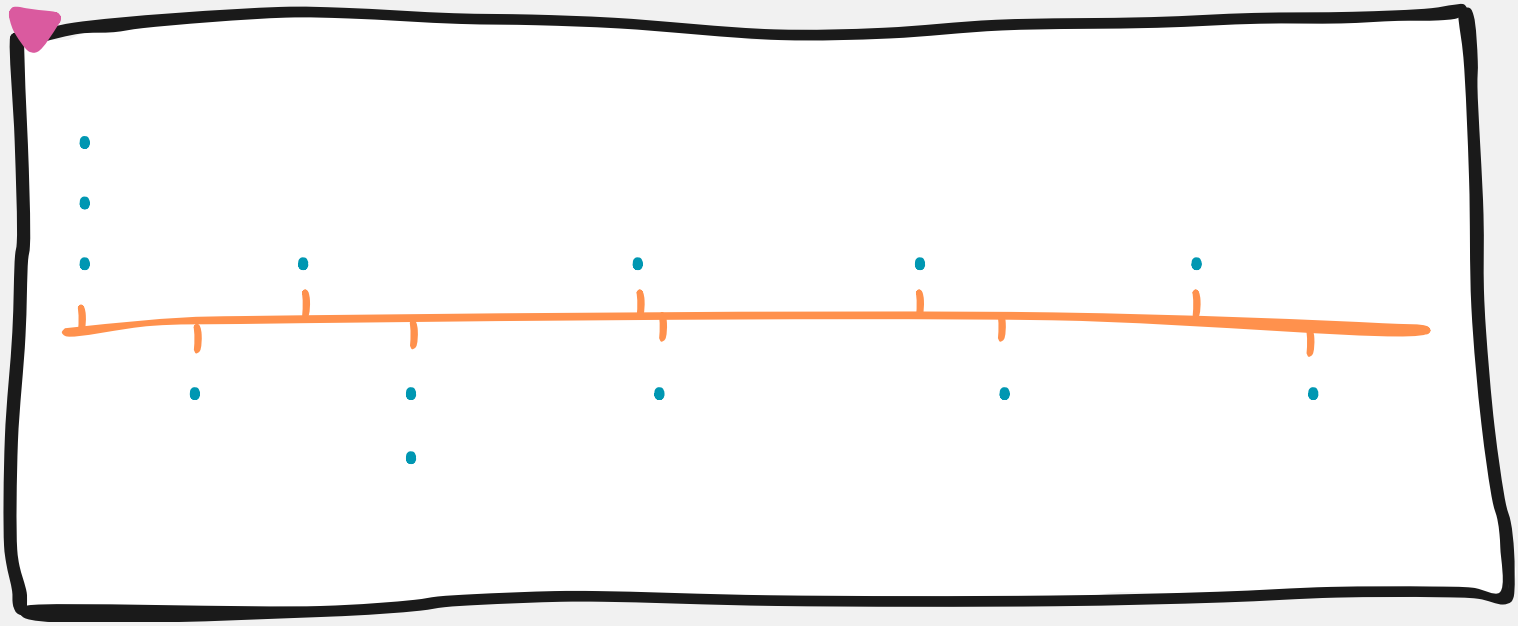
TIMELINE

Timelines are useful to help keep track of the order of, and highlight significant events. They can be used to look at past events, but also future ones.

Based on the chapter you just read, there are a lot of signs leading up to the bigger event of the 2nd coming. Some of them are even happening now!

Read **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** and **Revelation 20** and timeline the events listed below in the correct order. Draw pictures on the timeline to help your **re:**member it better.

- The non Christians hear their judgement.
- Non Christians who are dead stay dead.
- Jesus returns with the New Jerusalem.
- Non Christians who are alive go to sleep.
- Christians who are dead meet the Lord in the air.
- Christians who are alive meet the Lord in the air.
- Satan and non Christians die a final death in the lake of fire.
- A loud command.
- The Lord comes down from Heaven.
- Satan gathers the dead non Christians.
- Trumpet call.
- 1000 years in Heaven.
- Satan roams the empty earth.



Read **2 Timothy 3:1-5** and fill in the blanks.

'1 But mark this: There will be _____ times in the _____ days. 2 People will be _____ of _____, lovers of _____, boastful, proud, abusive, _____ to their parents, _____, unholy, 3 _____ _____, unforgiving, slanderous, _____ self-control, brutal, not lovers of the _____, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure _____ than lovers of God– 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have _____ to do with such people.'

? Do you see these characteristics today in the world around you and also in yourself?

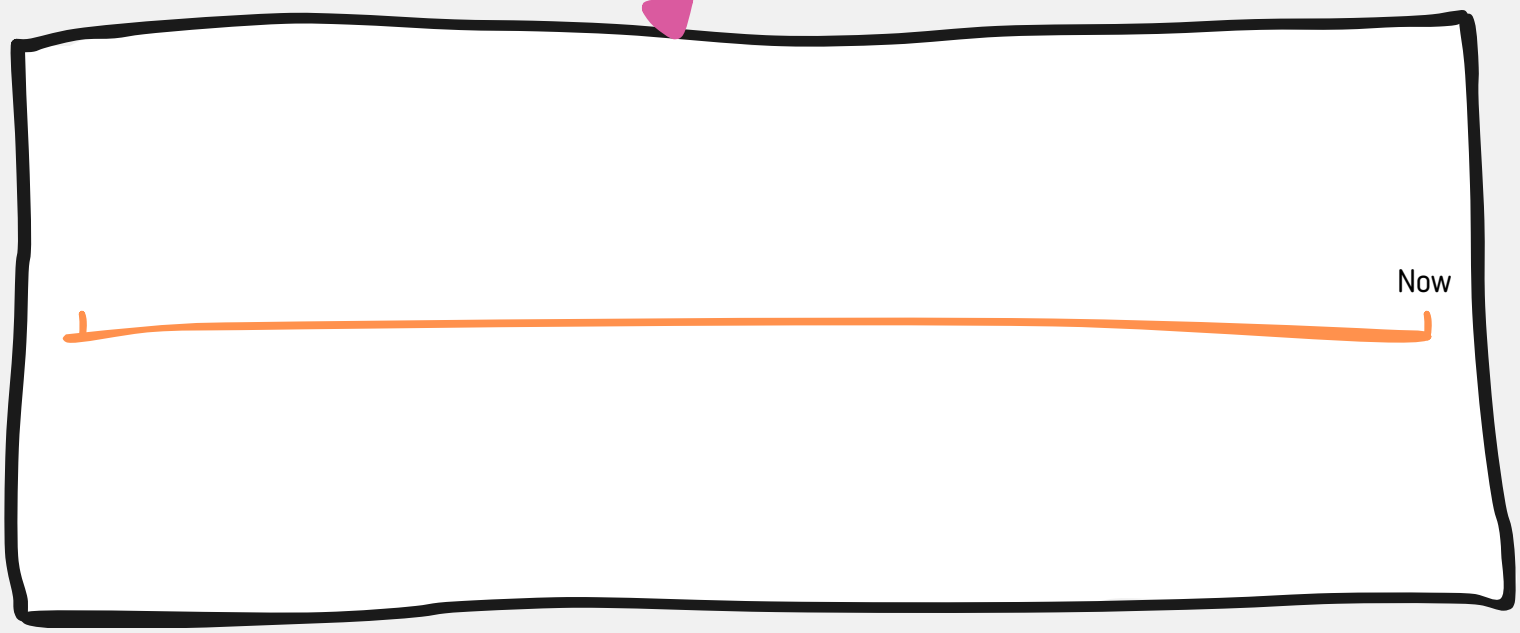
? How does that make you feel?

A big part of our identity in being friends with Jesus, is in living with Heaven in our focus. Living a life that **re:**flects God's character and the way Jesus treated people, is also a taste of how it will be in Heaven.

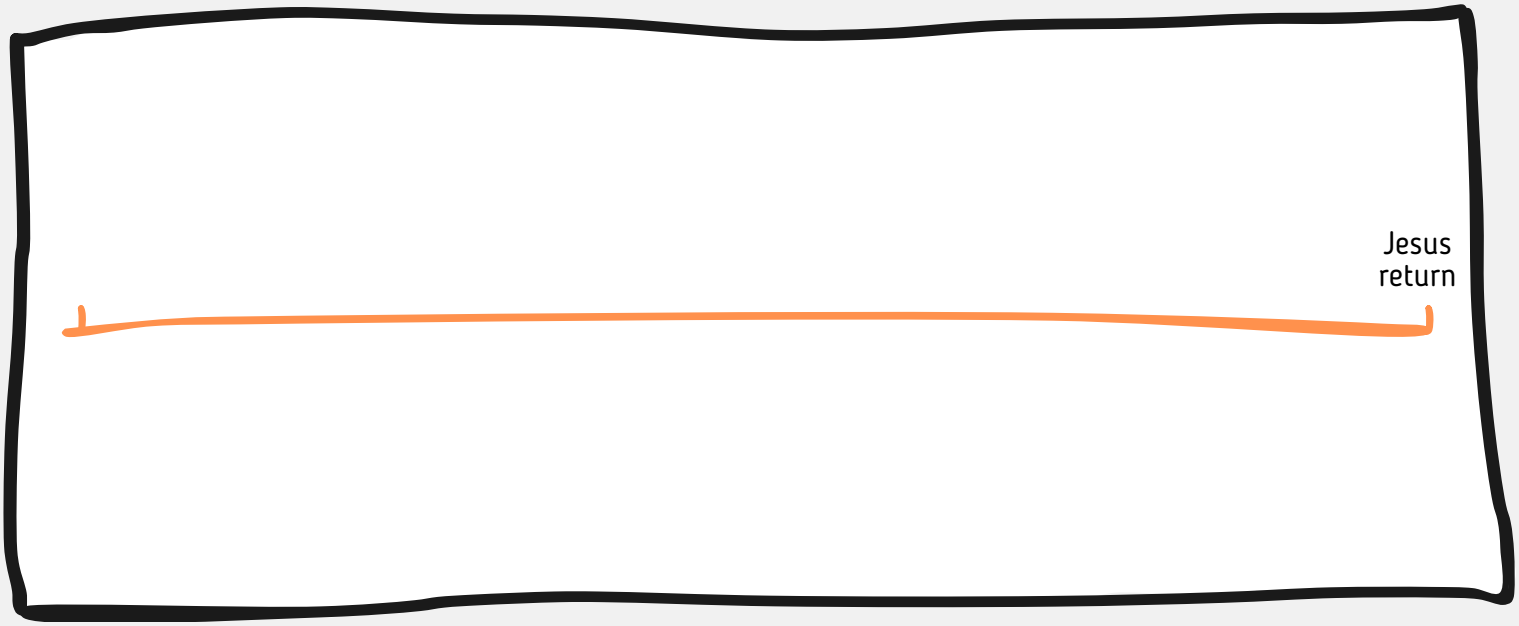
Speaking of identity, can you pin point the pivotal events, conversations, people etc. in your life who have helped to shape you to be the person you are today?

- **Write 2 timelines** - 1 for the past / now and 1 for the future.

1. **Re:**flect on the identity shaping moments, people, conversations etc. you have experienced so far and plot them.



2. What do you want to experience / what kind of person do you want to be in the future?



? Having plotted key moments from your life, can you see a pattern in the things and people who have been with you on the journey?

? How do you feel about potentially being a name plotted on someone else's timeline because you were a meaningful part of their life journey?

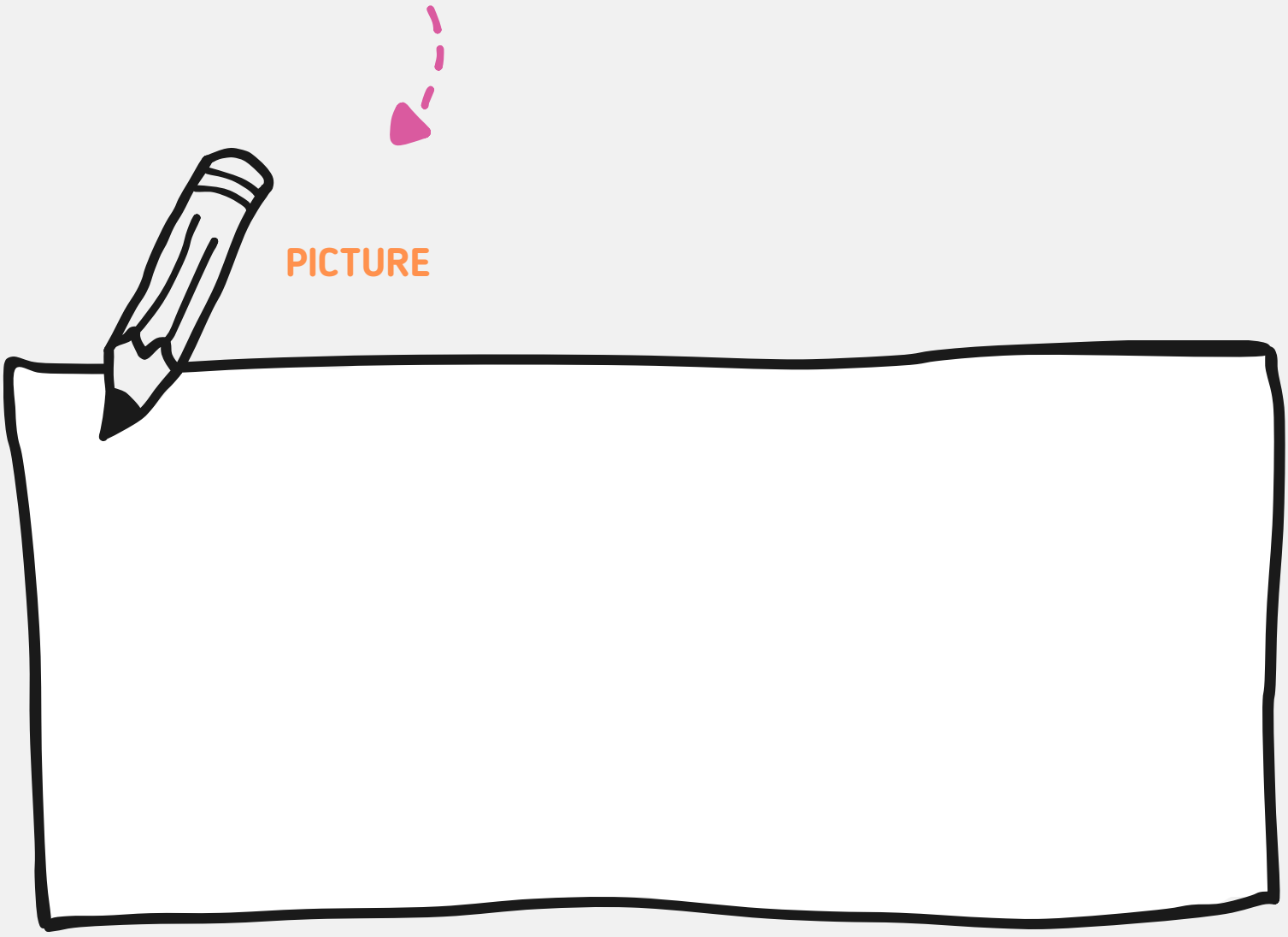
? Is how you are living your life right now, **re:**flective of Jesus and His character?

? Is your identity rooted in living looking forward to Jesus' **re:**turn?

? What do you look forward to about Heaven?

? Does seeing the order of events of the end days laid out in a timeline, make you feel less confused and more prepared for what is to come? Explain any thoughts you have.

? How do we navigate living in this world which is quickly becoming like what we read in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, and not being influenced to live like what is described?

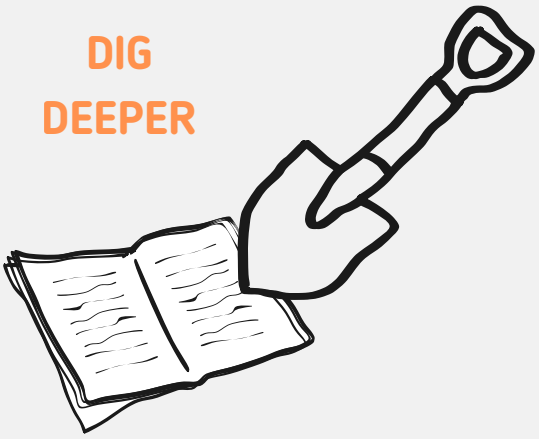


Draw something to represent your thoughts and feelings after this moment together. Or, if you are not thrilled about drawing, go back through today's gathering and use a colour or symbol, underline or circle the words that stood out to you. Is there a theme in what you noticed?

SONG

When We See Your Face - *Sovereign Grace Music*

DIG DEEPER



Extra verses to extend the exploration!

- 2 Thessalonians 1:7-12
- John 14:1-4
- 2 Thessalonians 2 (encouraging!)

QUOTE

He became one of us so that we might become one WITH Him.
He entered our world with the high hope that we would enter His.
- Max Lucado

PONDER

- Do you feel like you could start living as if Heaven started now and what would that **re:**quire?
- Where, how, in whom, do you find your identity? Is that where you want to find it?

WORD

Summarise this time together in 1 word or sentence.
*What is something you want to **re:**member?*

Use this word now in a short prayer between you and God.

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