



## LAST Leader Guide

### NOTE TO LEADER:

1. You may want to make a side-by-side list of the two definitions of “last” on a marker board or flip chart. It is not necessary to create a long list of synonyms — just enough to contrast the two meanings.
2. There are many details about “last” and the “last days” that are mentioned in Scripture. This study is not meant to be comprehensive in that regard, but to serve as a look at the topic through the meanings of “end” and “endure.”
3. If time is limited, you may want to look at the first 5-6 references in each list, OR every other reference, and encourage participants to complete the study when time allows.

**Opening Prayer:** “Almighty God, our heavenly Father, because of Your tender love toward us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may remain steadfast in this faith to the end and finally come to life everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

The word “last” can bring a sigh — even tears: the final person chosen for a team or event; the ending visit on a screened front porch of a long-owned home; the closing day of a much-enjoyed vacation with family; the inadequate remaining precious days with a relative or friend.

With a partner or the group, make a list of synonyms for “last” when used to indicate an ending.

**Answers may include:** final / concluding / end / finished / finale / terminal / complete.

What do we learn about final matters in the following references?

**Job 19:25-27** For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. <sup>26</sup>And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, <sup>27</sup>whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.  
My heart faints within me!

The Living Redeemer — God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ — will stand upon the earth at the Last. The absence of His physical presence will end. Mortal life does not last and the human body decays. Yet, Job says that in his flesh, in his very own (resurrected) body, he will see God with his own eyes.

**Daniel 12:1-3** “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. <sup>2</sup>And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup>And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

There will be a time of trouble during which God’s people will suffer much, but everyone whose name is written in the Book of Life will be delivered. There will be a resurrection of those who sleep in the dust, the faithful to everlasting life. The wise and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars.

**Matthew 6:19–21** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The treasures of earthly life are temporary, perishable, and vulnerable to theft. We are to turn our hearts toward heavenly treasures.

**Matthew 20:10-16** Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup>And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, <sup>12</sup>saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ <sup>13</sup>But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’ <sup>14</sup>Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. <sup>15</sup>Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity? <sup>16</sup>So the last will be first, and the first last.”

Our serving the Lord is not for the purpose of earning a reward or taking pride in an achievement. It is a response of gratitude for God’s grace — whether that be during a long lifetime or as short a time as the thief on the cross. It is not the length of service which is important, nor is it what we have earned or deserved, but the privilege of serving the kingdom in love.

**Mark 10:41–45** And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. <sup>42</sup> And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup>But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup>and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup>For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Many who have enjoyed the status of power and wealth in earthly life will find themselves without either, while those who had fewer resources may now be held in higher standing.

**Mark 13:31–32** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.<sup>31</sup> “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Jesus says that heaven and earth (creation as we know it) will pass away, but His words will not. Speaking as the Son of Man, He adds that no one knows the time of His return except God the Father.

**Romans 14:10–12** Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup>for it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”<sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

All of us will stand before the judgment seat of God and each of us will give an account of our life. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess to God.

**1 Corinthians 15:22–26, 51–54** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup>But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup>Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

<sup>31</sup>Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>32</sup>in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>33</sup>For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>34</sup>When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” Sin entered the world because of Adam’s fall, and death is its consequence. Since all have sinned, all face mortal death. However, death will not last: God will give victory over death through our Lord and the dead will be raised imperishable — to eternal life. Not all will sleep, but at the sound of the trumpet, all shall be changed. After destroying rule and authority and power, Christ will deliver His kingdom to God the Father.

Another usage of “last” has a different emphasis — one of enduring. Have you purchased a product that continued to serve for a long period of time? Experienced going on even when times were tough? We, and our lives, change, but some things remain the same. List other words with similar meaning. **Answers may include: eternal / everlasting / forever / imperishable / abide / survive / always / persist / continual / persevering / steadfast.**

Record things that continue which are mentioned in the passages below.

**Jeremiah 31:33–34** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

God promises to make an everlasting covenant with Israel and to us through faith in Christ, written within, on our hearts. He will forgive our iniquity and remember our sin no more.

**Lamentations 3:22–24** The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup>they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup>“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

The steadfast love of the Lord, His mercy, and His faithfulness never cease. We place our hope in Him.

**Matthew 16:15–18** He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The church’s worship of Christ is based on Peter’s confession and the faith of the believers. The gates of hell will not prevail against the church or this confession. In response to God’s grace, we continue setting aside one day of the week to worship Him in prayer, praise, and thanks, through His Word and Sacrament.

**Matthew 28:19–20** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

We continue making disciples to the end, baptizing and teaching. Christ is always with us.

**John 3:33–36a** Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. <sup>34</sup>For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. <sup>35</sup>The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. <sup>36a</sup>Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; God is true. (Titus 1:2 says it another way: *God never lies*.) We can trust His promises. The Son, whom God loves and sent from heaven, utters the words of God — Who has given Jesus the Holy Spirit without measure. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.

**Romans 8:26–27, 35–39** Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The Spirit Who dwells within us (8:9) helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us in prayer in accordance with the will of God. We are more than conquerors through Christ; nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**1 Corinthians 3:13–15** Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup>If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Each person's work will be evaluated on Judgment Day. What will survive is that which is built upon the foundation of faithfulness, and it will be rewarded.

**Hebrews 1:1–3, 8–12** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>1</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>8</sup>But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. <sup>9</sup>You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” <sup>10</sup>And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; <sup>11</sup>they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, <sup>12</sup>like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

**NOTE:** Verse 10 quotes Psalm 102:25–27.

Once God spoke through the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us through His Son, through whom He created the world. An heir, the imprint of God's nature, and the righteous founder of our salvation, Jesus upholds the universe by the word of His power and sits at the right hand of the Father. Earth and heaven will perish, but His throne and His kingdom are forever.

**1 Peter 1:23–25** Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup>for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of

grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, “but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

The living and abiding Word of the Lord remains forever. Through the Good News we are born again of imperishable seed. In this changing life, God’s Word remains. The Law condemns us, but the Gospel offers redemption, faith, and hope.

**Revelation 1:8, 17–18** “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

<sup>17</sup>When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup>and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades

The Lord God Almighty is eternal. Christ describes Himself as the first and the last, the living one, holding the keys of Heaven and hell. Using the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, Jesus declares Himself the beginning and the end, applying to Himself His eternal divinity.

**NOTE:** Hebrews 13:8 states it this way: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* In 1 Peter 1:20: *He was foreknown before the foundation of the world ...*

**Revelation 22:3–5, 16** No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

<sup>16</sup>“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

Nothing unclean will enter heaven, but the throne of God and the Lamb will be there — and His servants, worshipping Him face-to-face. Night will be no more, but no lamp or sun will be needed because the glory of God will be its light. The faithful servants of the Lamb will reign forever and ever. The promised root and descendant of David is, was, and is to come — soon. Come, Lord Jesus!

How does Jesus’ statement *It is finished* in **John 19:28–30** comprise both ending and enduring?

<sup>28</sup>After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” <sup>29</sup>A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup>When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

His atoning work is accomplished. Through Word and Sacrament, faith, forgiveness and salvation continue to be available to all who believe.

How do both meanings affect us and our everyday lives?

We persevere, following the advice given in Jude 20–21: *But [we], beloved, building ourselves up in our most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, <sup>21</sup>keep ourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.*

A LWML sister in Christ wrote of her son’s temporary remission in her Bible study (Winter 2012): “We rejoiced and thanked God. But it was not to last.” What does last, though, is “his soul is with our Lord and that same Lord will raise his body and we will see him one day.”

**Closing:** “The Christian life is an endurance race, run with remembrance of the saints who have already finished. But most of all we look to Jesus and His cross. In Him, our race is already won. “Lord Jesus, save me from my sin, which clings so closely, and give me endurance to do Your will. Amen.”<sup>2</sup>

**When Time Allows:**

List additional synonyms of both meanings and research them in a concordance.

Study one or more of the creeds\* for evidence of both meanings of “last.”

Read 1 Corinthians 13, Romans 8 or Hebrews 10, listing items which fall under each meaning.

**Closing Hymn:** Sing or say together “The Day Is Surely Dawning” (*LSB* 508 and *TLH* 611, verses 1-3,6; *LW* 462, verses 1-4).

**Closing Prayer:** *Blessed Father, According to Your great mercy, You have caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us. [We thank you that,] by Your power, we are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this we rejoice! Amen. (1 Peter 1:3b–6a)*

<sup>1</sup>Prayer for Steadfast Faith (200), *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*, 311

<sup>2</sup>Adapted, *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*, 2124

\*Creeds may be found in *LSB* 158-9, 319-20, 322-323; *TLSB* xxxvi-xxxvii and 1975; *Luther's Small Catechism*.

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