

**Youth Culture Lesson**  
**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
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**Apocalypse...Now?**

Talking About the End of the World

**What Happened:**

The world didn't come to a screeching halt May 21, 2011. No one was raptured, to our knowledge. Jesus did not return. For most of us, life went pretty much like it always does, which made May 22 a rather awkward day for Harold Camping.

Camping, the 89-year-old host for Family Radio, had been telling his followers the beginning of the end officially would arrive at 6 p.m. (Pacific Time) on May 21, when about 3 percent of the world's population would be taken up to heaven.

Many believers spent their own money to spread Camping's message nationally. In Colorado Springs, an unemployed woman spent \$1,200 to put the message on 10 bus benches.

It wasn't the first time Camping had made such a pronouncement: He first predicted the world would end in 1994, and he's still holding firm in his belief that Oct. 21 will mark the fiery, cataclysmic end of humanity. On a special radio program May 23, he said May 21 marked an invisible judgment day. "It won't be spiritual on Oct. 21," Camping said. "The world is going to be destroyed altogether, but it will be very quick."

Most Christians didn't pay much heed to Camping's predictions. After all, Jesus said, "no one knows the day or the hour" when the earth will pass away. Even so, it still left some of us in an awkward position, too.

"On Saturday, most believers didn't dress up in white robes and wait for Jesus in their front lawns," wrote Gabe Lyons and Jonathan Merritt in *The Washington Post*. "We ran errands, bathed our children and laughed with friends. The hysteria generated by this fringe group shouldn't distort non-believers' understandings of the Christian faith."

However, for some non-believers, it did distort their understanding. Lots of people grow up not knowing much of anything about Christianity. Sometimes, all they know about our faith is what they see on the news or hear around town. When something such as this happens, Christianity's messages of grace, forgiveness and eternal salvation get lost in the hubbub. Sometimes, non-Christians might not see the difference between us and Harold Camping.

**Talk About It:**

Did you hear about Camping's prediction? Did you think about it? Was there a part of you that wondered if he might be right?

While few Christians believed the rapture would happen on May 21, many see what's going on in the world today and believe we're living in the end times. Then again, Christians from Jesus' time thought the end of the world was just around the corner, too. Do you think we could see the end of the world in our lifetime, or is it still a long way away?

Let's suppose the world was going to end—however you want to define it—next Tuesday. Would that make you happy? Sad? Scared? Why?

It can be frustrating when other Christians make us look bad. Has there ever been a time when a Christian embarrassed you? Has a national figure made a bad moral judgment or a political statement you disagreed with? Has someone closer, such as a friend or family member done something you don't think represented Jesus well?

**What the Bible Says:**

“Be on guard! Be alert! You will not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with an assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping” (Mark 13:33-36).

“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come in the thief in the night” (1 Thes. 5:1).

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 22:12-13).