

Small Group Guide

“Stay Awake: Living in the Light of Eternity”

Based on Mark 13:32–37

Middle School and High School Sunday School | 30–35 Minutes

Overview

What comes to mind when you hear, “Be ready”? Maybe a coach preparing you for a game, a teacher announcing a test, or a parent telling you it is time to leave. Jesus also tells His followers to be ready—but He is talking about something bigger than our next activity.

In this lesson, students will explore four ways to live in light of Jesus’s promised return: live with certainty, live with purpose, live with vigilance, and live ready. Being ready does not mean predicting dates, panicking about the news, or trying to earn God’s love. It means trusting Jesus and faithfully following Him in everyday life—at school, at home, online, and with friends.

Teacher Note: Use the first two questions in each discussion section as your main questions. The additional questions are optional if time allows. The suggested timing totals approximately 33 minutes.

Key Takeaways

- **Jesus will return, but we do not know when.** Our confidence rests in His promise, not in predictions or social media videos.
 - **Following Jesus matters right now.** Eternal life begins when we trust Him; our relationship with Him shapes how we live today.
 - **You do not have to be an adult to serve God.** Your words, choices, abilities, and kindness can make a difference now.
 - **Being around Christianity is not the same as trusting Christ.** Going to church or having Christian parents does not replace a personal response to Jesus.
 - **Staying spiritually awake means paying attention and responding to God.** It means putting His Word into practice.
 - **Readiness is rooted in hope, not fear.** We are saved by God’s grace through faith in Christ, not by having a perfect record of good behavior.
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Opening Discussion — 3 Minutes

Begin with this question:

Have you ever missed something because you were distracted—your name being called, instructions for an assignment, an important play, or something a friend said? What had your attention?

Allow two or three students to share.

Then ask:

Can something have your attention without deserving that much of your attention?

Explain: Distractions are not always bad things. Sometimes good or ordinary things take up so much space that we overlook what matters most. Jesus’s instruction to stay awake challenges us to pay attention to Him and the responsibilities He has given us.

Scripture Reading — 2 Minutes

Have a student read **Mark 13:32–37** aloud from the ESV.

Before the reading, ask students to listen for repeated instructions about watching and staying awake.

Afterward, ask:

What instruction does Jesus repeat?

Briefly explain: Jesus describes a man leaving his home and giving his servants work to do. The servants do not know when he will return, but they know what they should be doing while he is away. Jesus calls His followers to that same kind of faithfulness.

Discussion Questions — 18 Minutes

Section 1 — Live with Certainty (verses 32–33) | 4 Minutes

1. **Jesus says no one knows the day or hour of His return. How should that affect the way we respond to a video or post claiming to know when the world will end?**

Teacher prompt: We should compare claims with Scripture. A confident speaker, dramatic video, or large following does not make a prediction true.

2. **If Jesus’s return is certain but the timing is unknown, what would it look like to take His promise seriously during a normal school week?**

Possible examples: Being honest on an assignment, making things right after an argument, including someone who is left out, or taking time to pray.

3. **Optional:** Read Acts 1:11. Why does it matter that our hope is in Jesus Himself returning, rather than in our ability to figure out a timeline?

Main Point: We do not need to know the date to trust the One who promised to return.

Section 2 — Live with Purpose (verse 34) | 5 Minutes

4. **The master gives each servant work to do. What are some ways someone your age can serve Jesus right now?**

Teacher prompt: Encourage students to think beyond being on a stage. Listening to a lonely student, helping at home, serving younger children, and encouraging a friend all matter.

5. **God has entrusted you with time, abilities, opportunities, and relationships. Which one is hardest for you to use wisely? What would one better choice look like this week?**

Quick scenario: You notice a student sitting alone, but your friends want you to come sit with them. What could you do that would show care for that student?

Allow several responses. Point out that students could invite the person to join them or ask a friend to go sit with the person together.

6. **Optional:** Romans 12:4–8 describes believers having different gifts. How does comparing yourself with someone who seems more talented keep you from using what God has given you?

Main Point: You do not have to wait until you are older or more confident to be faithful to God.

Section 3 — Live with Vigilance (verses 35–36) | 5 Minutes

7. **What might “going through the motions” of Christianity look like for a teenager?**

Possible examples: Giving the expected answer in Sunday School without thinking about it, singing worship songs while ignoring their meaning, or acting one way at church and another way in a group chat.

Teacher note: Spiritual struggles or distractions do not automatically mean someone is not a Christian. The question is whether we are willing to listen to God, repent, and respond.

8. **What is the difference between knowing what Jesus teaches and actually following Him?**

Quick scenario: Someone posts an embarrassing picture of a classmate in your group chat. Everyone starts making jokes. You know Scripture teaches us to love our neighbors. What would putting that truth into practice look like?

Teacher prompt: Not joining in is a start. Students might also ask others to stop, check on the person privately, or seek help from a trusted adult if it becomes bullying.

9. **Optional:** A rumble strip alerts a driver who is drifting off the road. What can help us recognize that we are drifting spiritually?

Possible examples: Scripture, the Holy Spirit’s conviction, a caring friend’s concern, or correction from a parent or trusted leader. Do not assume every difficult experience is punishment from God.

10. **Optional:** In Mark 14:32–42, Jesus’s disciples struggle to stay awake when He tells them to watch and pray. What does that teach us about our need for prayer and God’s help?

Main Point: Spiritual alertness means listening to God and acting on what He shows us.

Section 4 — Live Ready (verse 37) | 4 Minutes

11. **Which question challenges you most right now, and why?**

- Am I paying attention to Jesus?
- Am I being faithful with what He has given me?
- Am I trusting Christ personally?
- Am I living with hope?

Students may answer aloud or reflect silently.

12. **What is the difference between being ready for Jesus’s return and being afraid that you can never be good enough?**

Teacher emphasis: Our hope is in Jesus’s death and resurrection. We cannot earn salvation by doing enough good things. We turn from sin and trust Him; obedience grows out of that relationship.

13. **Optional:** A friend says, “Thinking about Jesus coming back scares me.” How could you respond with honesty and kindness?

Teacher prompt: Listen before answering. Point your friend toward Jesus’s character and promises. You do not have to answer every question; you can invite a trusted Christian adult into the conversation.

Main Point: Jesus calls us to a life of faithful hope, not constant panic.

Reflection and Self-Examination — 4 Minutes

Explain that examining our hearts means honestly bringing our lives before God. It is not a competition to see who looks most spiritual.

Give students a quiet minute to consider:

- Is there a sin I need to confess to God?
- Have I hurt someone through my words, messages, or actions?
- Is there something right that I know I should do but keep avoiding?
- Am I personally trusting Jesus, or mostly depending on my family's faith?
- What is one step of obedience I can take this week?

Invite students to write down one response privately. They do not need to share personal details.

Teacher Note: Let students know they can speak with you or a pastor after class about salvation, doubts, or fears. Forgiveness does not mean hiding abuse or staying in an unsafe situation; encourage students to tell a trusted adult if someone is hurting them.

Practical Applications — 3 Minutes

Ask each student to choose **one** action for the coming week.

For Personal Readiness

Read Psalm 139:23–24. Spend five quiet minutes asking God to help you see where you need to repent, trust Him, or obey.

For Purpose and Assignment

Choose one way to serve without being asked: help at home, encourage someone at school, or ask a church leader where you can help.

For Vigilance

Put your phone away for five minutes each day while you read Mark 13:32–37 and pray. Notice one truth you can put into practice.

For Living with Hope

Pray each day for one friend who does not know Jesus. Look for a natural opportunity to listen, show kindness, and talk about your faith without pressuring them.

For Stewardship

Choose one small change in how you use your time, money, or abilities. For example, replace ten minutes of scrolling with encouraging someone or helping with a task.

Have students complete this sentence:

“This week, I will _____ because I want to follow Jesus faithfully.”

Closing Prayer — 3 Minutes

Invite one or two students to pray, then close with this prayer or your own words:

Father, thank You that we can trust Your promises. Thank You for sending Jesus to save us and for the hope of His return. Forgive us for the times we ignore You or act like following You can wait. Help us pay attention to Your Word and depend on Your strength. Show us how to serve You at school, at home, at church, and online. Give us courage to do what is right, humility to admit when we are wrong, and kindness toward people around us. Help us live ready because we trust Jesus—not because we think we can earn Your love. In Jesus’s name, amen.

Looking Ahead

Before your next meeting, read **Mark 14:1–42**. You may divide it into three shorter readings: verses 1–11, 12–31, and 32–42.

Watch for the different ways people respond to Jesus. Notice the difference between the disciples’ confident words and their actions when following Him becomes difficult.

Come ready to discuss:

“What helps us follow Jesus when we feel tired, distracted, afraid, or pressured by other people?”