

Small Group Guide

"Shaken and Stirred: Signs of the Times" | Mark 13:1-13

OVERVIEW

In this sermon, Pastor Virgil walks through Mark 13:1-13, where Jesus shifts his disciples' attention away from the grandeur of the Jerusalem temple and toward the greater mission of the church. Using five key signs from Jesus' teaching, the sermon challenges believers to avoid distraction, endure difficulty, pursue the Great Commission, trust the Holy Spirit in persecution, and rest in the confidence of their salvation. This guide is designed to help your group go deeper into those themes together.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Open your time together in prayer. Ask God to soften hearts, sharpen minds, and make your conversation fruitful. Encourage group members to bring their Bibles and any notes they took during the sermon.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The church is not a building. It is an assembly of redeemed people gathered for a purpose greater than any structure.
- Jesus warned his disciples not to be distracted by temporal things when eternal things demand our attention.
- Difficulty, persecution, and global upheaval are not signs that God has lost control. They are signs that his redemptive plan is advancing.
- The return of Christ is directly connected to the proclamation of the gospel to all nations (Mark 13:10).
- The Holy Spirit equips believers to endure and speak even in the most extreme circumstances.
- Endurance to the end is the mark of genuine saving faith, and that endurance is made possible by Christ himself.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SECTION 1: The Temple and Our Distractions (Mark 13:1-2)

1. The disciples were amazed by the beauty of the temple. What are some modern equivalents -- things within or around the church -- that can draw our attention away from the mission of God?
2. Pastor Virgil made the distinction that we do not go to church; we are the church. How does that shift in thinking change the way you approach Sunday mornings, your week, and your relationships with other believers?
3. Solomon's dedication prayer for the temple expressed a desire that even foreigners would come to know the one true God. In what ways does your local church function as a light that draws people in? Where might that light be dimming?
4. Have you ever found yourself more concerned with the comfort or appearance of a church facility than with the people who need to walk through its doors? What does that reveal about the shift needed in our hearts and minds?

SECTION 2: Enduring Difficulty and Avoiding Deception (Mark 13:3-8)

5. Jesus warned his disciples not to be led astray, and he pointed out that wars, earthquakes, and famines are only the beginning of birth pains. How do you personally guard against becoming either panicked or spiritually numb when you see suffering and chaos in the world?

6. Pastor Virgil described the closing of churches not just as a loss of a building but as a dimming of gospel light in a community. What responsibility does each individual member carry in keeping that light burning?
 7. Jesus said these difficult things "must take place." How does knowing that God is not surprised by global suffering change the way you pray about world events?
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SECTION 3: The Catalyst for Christ's Return (Mark 13:10)

8. Pastor Virgil shared that the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations before Christ returns, and he presented statistics showing that more than 7,000 people groups remain unreached. How does that reality land with you personally? Does it create urgency, guilt, inspiration, or something else?
 9. The sermon described First Baptist Stanleyville's growth from a church with awareness about missions to one actively engaged locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. What does faithful participation in the Great Commission look like for your small group specifically?
 10. Of the seven letters Jesus wrote to the churches in Revelation, only two received commendation. Pastor Virgil asked which category our church would fall into. Which category would you say your own personal walk with Christ falls into right now?
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SECTION 4: The Comfort of the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:11)

11. Hugh Latimer, facing death by fire, said: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out." What does that kind of courage reveal about what it means to truly believe the promises of God?

12. Jesus promised that in moments of trial, the Holy Spirit would give his followers the words to speak. Have you ever experienced a moment where you felt supernaturally equipped to speak or act in a difficult situation? Share that experience with the group if you are willing.
 13. American Christians rarely face the kind of persecution described in this passage. How do you think relative comfort has shaped the way the American church understands and responds to the Holy Spirit's role in our lives?
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SECTION 5: Confidence in Salvation and Endurance (Mark 13:12-13)

14. Pastor Virgil shared the story of Asif (a pseudonym), an Afghan Christian who led more than 30 people to faith before being killed by his own father. How does a story like that reframe what it means to count the cost of following Jesus?
 15. Jesus said in Mark 13:13 that the one who endures to the end will be saved. This is not a statement that salvation can be lost, but rather that genuine faith produces genuine endurance. How does your life reflect the kind of endurance Jesus is describing?
 16. The sermon closed with the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20, where Jesus promises to be with his followers always, to the end of the age. How does that promise of his presence sustain you in your own mission, whether across the world or across the street?
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PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of the following commitments to make as a group before your next meeting.

Pray with focus. Spend five minutes each day this week praying specifically for one unreached people group. The Joshua Project website (joshuaproject.net) provides daily profiles that make this easy and concrete.

Audit your distractions. Take an honest personal inventory of what competes most with your commitment to God's mission. Write it down. Bring it before God in prayer and ask him to reorder your priorities.

Have a gospel conversation. Identify one person in your life who does not know Christ. Commit to praying for them daily this week and looking for a natural opportunity to share your faith with them.

Learn about global missions. If your church has upcoming mission trip opportunities or mission-focused events, make a concrete plan to attend, give, or go. Talk as a group about how you might engage together.

Encourage a persecuted believer. Research a ministry that supports persecuted Christians, such as Voice of the Martyrs or Open Doors USA. Consider how your group might pray for, write to, or financially support a believer facing persecution.

Memorize the catalyst. Commit Mark 13:10 to memory this week. Let it serve as a daily reminder of why the church exists and what your role in that mission is.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your group time by praying together. Consider praying specifically for the following:

- Unreached people groups around the world
- Persecuted believers who are enduring for the sake of Christ
- Your own church's faithfulness to the Great Commission
- Any group member who is walking through a personal valley right now
- A renewed sense of urgency and joy in sharing the gospel

"And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations." -- Mark 13:10