

Student Small Group Guide

“Shaken and Stirred: Signs of the Times” | Mark 13:1–13

OVERVIEW

In Mark 13:1–13, Jesus prepares his disciples for a world filled with confusion, conflict, false teaching, and opposition. Instead of telling them to panic, hide, or spend all their time trying to predict the future, Jesus calls them to stay faithful and continue sharing the gospel.

For middle and high school students, this passage speaks directly to the pressures they face at school, online, within friendships, and in a culture that does not always understand or accept biblical truth. Jesus reminds us that temporary things will not last, difficult circumstances do not mean God has lost control, and the Holy Spirit will help us live courageously for Christ.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Open your time together in prayer. Ask God to help students understand his Word, participate honestly, and recognize opportunities to live out their faith.

Encourage students to bring their Bibles and read Mark 13:1–13 together before beginning the discussion.

Leader Note: You will probably not have time to discuss every question. Choose the questions that best fit your students and allow enough time for meaningful conversation.

OPENING QUESTION

If you learned that something you thought would last forever was suddenly going away, what would be the hardest thing for you to lose?

Examples might include:

- Your phone or social media
- A friendship
- Your place on a team
- Your reputation
- Your school
- A favorite activity

- A comfortable routine

Explain that the disciples believed the temple was impressive, important, and nearly indestructible—but Jesus reminded them that even the greatest things in this world are temporary.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The church is not simply a building. The church is made up of people who belong to Jesus and are called to live for his mission.
- Temporary things can easily distract us from what matters eternally.
- News about wars, disasters, suffering, and conflict should not cause Christians to panic or assume God has lost control.
- Not everyone who speaks about Jesus is teaching the truth. We must compare every message with God’s Word.
- Sharing the gospel is not only the responsibility of pastors, missionaries, or adults. Students can share Jesus where they are right now.
- The Holy Spirit helps believers know what to say and gives them courage when following Jesus is difficult.
- Genuine faith continues trusting and following Jesus, even when doing so becomes uncomfortable or costly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SECTION 1: What Has Your Attention?

Mark 13:1–2

1. The disciples were impressed by the temple’s enormous stones and beautiful buildings. What things impress students today or make someone appear important?

If students need help: Clothes, phones, athletic ability, appearance, popularity, followers, grades, relationships, cars, or money.
2. Is it wrong to enjoy nice things or appreciate beautiful places? When can those things become distractions or idols?
3. What receives most of your attention during an average week? What might that reveal about what is most important to you?

4. Pastor Virgil explained that we do not simply “go to church”—believers **are the church**. What could it look like for you to be the church at school, on your team, in your neighborhood, or online?
5. If your church building disappeared tomorrow, how could the people of the church continue worshiping God, helping others, and sharing the gospel?

Current-Life Connection:

Following Jesus is not limited to Sunday mornings. Students represent Christ in classrooms, group chats, lunchrooms, practices, workplaces, and their own homes.

SECTION 2: Avoiding Deception and Fear

Mark 13:3–8

6. Jesus warned his followers, “See that no one leads you astray.” Where do students receive messages about what is true, valuable, or acceptable?

Possible answers: Friends, teachers, family, social media, influencers, music, movies, podcasts, or online videos.

7. How can you tell whether something you hear about God or Christianity is actually true?
8. Have you ever seen a frightening headline, video, or social-media post that made you feel anxious about the future? How did you respond?
9. Jesus said wars, earthquakes, and famines would occur, but he told his followers not to be alarmed. What is the difference between caring about suffering and living in constant fear?
10. What can you do when something online makes you afraid, confused, or uncertain about what to believe?

Practical responses might include:

- Pray before reacting.
- Read what Scripture says.
- Talk with a trusted Christian adult.
- Check whether the information is accurate.
- Avoid sharing frightening claims without verifying them.
- Remember that God remains in control.

Current-Life Connection:

Students encounter countless opinions every day. Following Jesus requires more than accepting whatever is popular, emotional, or repeated online. It means learning God’s Word well enough to recognize truth.

SECTION 3: Sharing the Gospel Where You Are

Mark 13:10

11. Jesus said, “The gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.” Why do you think sharing the gospel matters so much to God?
12. When you hear that thousands of people groups have little or no access to the gospel, what do you feel—concerned, inspired, overwhelmed, guilty, curious, or something else? Explain your answer.
13. You may not be able to travel to another country right now, but what opportunities do you already have to share the love and truth of Jesus?

Examples might include:

- Inviting someone to church or youth group
 - Praying with a struggling friend
 - Explaining why you believe in Jesus
 - Including someone who is usually left out
 - Serving someone without expecting recognition
 - Posting something truthful and encouraging online
 - Supporting missionaries through prayer or giving
14. What makes talking about Jesus difficult for students? Which concern is strongest for you?

- Fear of being judged
- Not knowing what to say
- Not wanting to seem pushy
- Fear of losing friends
- Worry about being asked a question you cannot answer
- Feeling as though your own life is not a good enough example

15. Think of one person you see regularly who may not know Jesus. What is one natural, respectful step you could take to show that person the love of Christ?

Current-Life Connection:

Students do not have to wait until adulthood to participate in God’s mission. Their school, team, workplace, neighborhood, and social-media connections are part of their mission field right now.

SECTION 4: Depending on the Holy Spirit

Mark 13:11

16. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would help his followers speak when they were placed in difficult situations. How does that promise encourage you?

17. Have you ever known that you should speak up but stayed quiet because you were afraid of what others might think? What happened?

18. When might a student need courage from the Holy Spirit?

Examples might include:

- Defending someone who is being mocked or bullied
- Refusing to participate in gossip
- Admitting that something is wrong
- Saying no when friends are pressuring them
- Explaining a biblical belief
- Inviting someone to church
- Praying publicly
- Asking forgiveness after hurting someone

19. Depending on the Holy Spirit does not mean we never study the Bible or prepare. How can knowing Scripture now help you when an unexpected opportunity comes later?

20. What is one situation in your life right now where you need the Holy Spirit to give you courage or the right words?

Current-Life Connection:

Students may not face arrest for following Jesus, but they can face teasing, rejection, rumors, exclusion, or pressure to hide what they believe. The Holy Spirit gives believers strength to respond with both truth and love.

SECTION 5: Following Jesus When It Is Hard

Mark 13:12–13

21. Jesus told his followers that some people would hate or reject them because of him. Why might someone react negatively to a student who genuinely follows Jesus?
22. What is the difference between being mistreated because you are following Jesus and receiving a negative reaction because you were disrespectful, judgmental, or unkind?
23. What might “enduring” as a Christian look like during middle or high school?

Possible answers:

- Continuing to pray when God feels distant
 - Obeying God when friends choose differently
 - Returning to God after making a mistake
 - Remaining kind to someone who mistreats you
 - Continuing to attend church when you feel left out
 - Trusting God during family conflict, illness, grief, or disappointment
 - Refusing to compromise your beliefs to gain acceptance
24. Following Jesus cost Asif, an Afghan Christian, his life after he had helped lead more than 30 people to Christ. How does his story challenge the way we sometimes think about following Jesus?

25. Jesus does not promise that following him will always be easy, but he does promise to remain with his people. How can knowing that Jesus is with you help when you feel alone at school, at home, or among friends?

26. What is one area of your life where you are tempted to give up, fit in, or hide your faith? What would faithfulness look like in that situation this week?

Current-Life Connection:

Endurance does not mean never struggling, doubting, or failing. It means continuing to turn back to Jesus, trust his grace, and follow him—even when doing so is difficult.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Challenge each student to choose at least one action to complete before the next meeting.

1. Check Your Influences

Choose one social-media account, artist, show, friendship, or other influence to evaluate honestly. Ask:

- Is this leading me closer to Jesus or farther away?
- Is it shaping me to think biblically?
- Does it encourage fear, anger, jealousy, temptation, or unhealthy comparison?

Make one change based on what God shows you.

2. Pray for One Person

Choose one friend, classmate, teammate, teacher, coworker, or family member who may not know Jesus. Pray for that person by name every day this week.

3. Start One Gospel Conversation

Look for a natural opportunity to mention your faith, share something God has done in your life, invite someone to church, or ask whether you can pray for someone.

You do not have to force a conversation. Be attentive, kind, and willing when an opportunity appears.

4. Be Courageously Kind

Notice someone who is being ignored, excluded, criticized, or mistreated. Sit with them, include them, defend them appropriately, or send them an encouraging message.

5. Replace Fear with Truth

When a frightening headline, video, or post appears, pause before reacting or sharing it. Pray, verify the information, and remind yourself:

“God is not surprised. God is still in control. I can trust him and remain faithful.”

6. Learn About Global Missions

Choose one country or unreached people group and learn about its culture and spiritual needs. Pray that people there will hear and respond to the gospel.

7. Memorize Mark 13:10

“And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.”

Write it on a card, save it as your phone background, or place it somewhere you will see it during the week.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Complete this sentence privately or share it with the group:

This week, I will live more boldly for Jesus by _____.

Encourage students to choose something specific and realistic—not simply “be a better Christian.”

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite students to pray aloud if they are comfortable. Short, one-sentence prayers are welcome.

Pray specifically for:

- Wisdom to recognize false or misleading messages
- Peace when world events or personal circumstances feel frightening
- Courage to live differently when others apply pressure
- Opportunities to share Jesus naturally and respectfully
- Classmates and friends who do not know Christ
- Christians around the world who face persecution
- Strength to remain faithful during difficult seasons
- The Holy Spirit's help in knowing what to say and do

FINAL REMINDER

Jesus did not share these truths so his followers would become frightened or obsessed with predicting the future. He wanted them to be prepared, faithful, and focused on their mission.

The world may feel shaken, but Jesus remains steady. Students can trust him, live courageously, and share the gospel wherever he has placed them.

“And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.” — Mark 13:10