

James Series Bible Study Guide

“A Faith That Transforms Everything”

Season 4: Episode 3 (Week 14)

James 4:13–16 and Mark 14:13-16

“Discerning God’s Will In Daily Life”

The Foundation is James 4:13-17 but a deep look at Mark 14:13-16 reveals to disciples of Jesus how to follow and discern the will of God in daily life. This Bible Study Guide Breaks down those amazing truths.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

WHEN EVERYTHING LOOKS OUT OF CONTROL

Mark 14:13–16

Main Passage

Read Mark 14:10–25.

Main Focus

Mark 14:13–16 appears to be a simple passage about preparing a room for the Passover, but the placement and details of the passage reveal something far deeper.

Judas has just agreed to betray Jesus.

The religious leaders are plotting His death.

The cross is approaching.

Everything appears to be moving out of control.

Yet Jesus knows exactly where a particular man will be, what he will be carrying, which house he will enter, how the owner will respond, and what condition the room will be in.

The disciples go and:

“found it just as he had told them.”

The passage reveals a Jesus who is never surprised, never confused, never reacting in panic, and never losing control of the story.

The Big Idea

When everything looks out of control, Jesus is still Lord of the story, and our responsibility is to faithfully obey the next thing He has made clear.

OPENING DISCUSSION

Have you ever gone through a season where everything appeared to be falling apart, only to look back later and see that God was still at work?

Why is it so difficult to trust God when we cannot see the entire plan?

Do you naturally want God to show you the final destination, or are you comfortable receiving only the next step?

READ THE PASSAGE

Read Mark 14:13–16 slowly.

Then read Mark 14:10–12 to understand what has happened immediately before it.

Finally, read Mark 14:17–25 to see what happens in the room the disciples prepare.

TRUTH ONE

WHEN EVERYTHING APPEARS TO BE FALLING APART, JESUS IS STILL COMPLETELY IN CONTROL

Teaching Statement

Chaos around us never means Jesus has lost control of the story.

Going Deeper

The placement of this passage matters.

Judas has agreed to betray Jesus.

The chief priests are plotting.

The cross is coming.

Yet Jesus calmly gives precise instructions about a man, a house, and a room.

Then:

“They found it just as he had told them.”

Jesus is not surprised by anything happening around Him.

He knows the betrayal is coming.

He knows the cross is coming.

He also knows resurrection is coming.

The presence of evil does not mean the absence of God's sovereignty.

Judas has a plan.

The religious leaders have a plan.

But there is a greater plan operating beneath their plans.

Key Truth

Just because evil is moving does not mean evil is winning.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Mark includes the detail that the disciples found everything exactly as Jesus had said?
2. How does this passage change the way we should view the events that follow?
3. Where in your life are you currently tempted to believe that everything is falling apart?
4. What is the difference between believing God is in control and believing every circumstance will be easy?
5. How can fear distort the way we interpret what God is doing?

Personal Application

What situation do you need to stop trying to control and begin entrusting to Jesus?

TRUTH TWO

GOD OFTEN GIVES US THE NEXT STEP INSTEAD OF THE ENTIRE PLAN

Teaching Statement

Faith does not require knowing the whole journey, only trusting Jesus enough to obey the next instruction.

Going Deeper

Jesus does not give the disciples an address.

He says:

Go into the city.

Look for the man.

Follow him.

Speak to the owner.

Enter the room.

Prepare.

The disciples receive direction one step at a time.

They cannot know the house until they follow the man.

They cannot see the room until they enter the house.

Each new piece of clarity comes after obedience to the previous instruction.

Key Truth

Some clarity only exists on the other side of obedience.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus gave the disciples instructions this way instead of simply giving them the address?
2. Why do we often want God to reveal the entire plan before we obey?
3. What is the difference between wanting guidance and wanting control?
4. Have you ever received greater clarity only after taking a step of obedience?
5. What is one thing God has already made clear to you that you may be delaying?

Personal Application

Write down one clear next step of obedience and commit to doing it this week.

TRUTH THREE

DISCERNMENT IS NOT KNOWING EVERYTHING

Teaching Statement

We do not need to understand everything around us; we need to remain focused on what God has made clear.

Going Deeper

Jerusalem would have been crowded and busy during Passover.

The disciples did not need to understand everything happening around them.

They needed to look for one thing:

The man carrying the jar.

Jesus gave them something specific to recognize.

This gives us a powerful picture of discernment.

Discernment is not knowing everything.

Discernment is recognizing what matters.

We become exhausted when we try to understand every circumstance, every person, every possibility, and every outcome.

But often the better question is:

What has God already made clear?

Key Truth

Confusion becomes dangerous when we allow what we do not know to make us disobedient to what we do know.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between discernment and simply having more information?
2. What sources of noise most often distract you from hearing and obeying God?
3. Why do we often focus more on what God has not revealed than what He has revealed?
4. What has God clearly told every believer through Scripture, regardless of our personal circumstances?
5. What is one thing God may be asking you to focus on in this season?

Personal Application

Identify one distraction you need to remove so you can better focus on what God has made clear.

TRUTH FOUR

OUR OBEDIENCE OFTEN DISCOVERS WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY PREPARED

Teaching Statement

God is often working ahead of us, preparing provision that obedience eventually leads us into.

Going Deeper

Jesus says the disciples will find:

“a large upper room furnished and ready.”

Before they arrive, the room already exists.

It is already large enough.

It is already furnished.

It is already ready.

Their obedience does not create the room.

Their obedience leads them to discover it.

This pattern appears throughout Scripture.

Abraham walks to the mountain and discovers the ram.

Elijah goes to Zarephath and finds the widow God has prepared.

Peter goes to Cornelius while God is already working in Cornelius.

Paul goes into Macedonia and finds Lydia.

God is often working on both ends of our obedience.

Key Truth

You are not the only one moving. God may already be working at the place He is calling you toward.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the phrase “furnished and ready” reveal about the work already happening before the disciples arrived?
2. How does this truth encourage us when we cannot yet see provision?
3. Why does the room being ready not remove the disciples' responsibility to prepare?
4. What is the healthy balance between trusting God's sovereignty and taking personal responsibility?
5. Where might God be asking you to move before you can see the full provision?

Personal Application

Identify one thing God has already placed in your hands that needs to be better prepared or stewarded.

TRUTH FIVE

WE CAN BE PARTICIPATING IN SOMETHING FAR GREATER THAN WE UNDERSTAND

Teaching Statement

What feels like a small act of obedience may be carrying enormous kingdom significance.

Going Deeper

Peter and John believe they are preparing a Passover meal.

But they do not understand the full significance of what is about to happen.

They think they are preparing to remember the Exodus.

Jesus is about to reveal the greater Exodus.

They think they are preparing a meal about the blood of a lamb.

Jesus is about to speak of His own blood poured out for many.

They think they are preparing a room.

God is preparing one of the most important moments in human history.

The disciples are participating in something infinitely greater than they understand.

Key Truth

You do not have to understand the full significance of your obedience for your obedience to matter.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are we often tempted to believe small acts of obedience are unimportant?
2. What ordinary acts of faithfulness has God used powerfully in your life?
3. How can our desire to be seen cause us to neglect hidden obedience?
4. What does this passage teach us about serving when we do not see immediate results?

5. Where might God simply be asking you to “prepare the room” and trust Him with the outcome?

Personal Application

Choose one small, unseen act of obedience to carry out this week.

Do it faithfully without needing recognition.

THE SUPERNATURAL MOVEMENT OF PROVIDENCE

There is another truth moving underneath the entire passage.

Nothing spectacular appears to happen.

No sea parts.

No fire falls.

No one is healed.

No dead person is raised.

A man carries water.

Two disciples walk through a city.

A homeowner opens a door.

A room is ready.

A meal is prepared.

But God is everywhere.

This is providence.

The invisible sovereignty of God moving through ordinary events.

The man may think he is simply carrying water.

The homeowner may think he is simply opening his house.

The disciples may think they are simply preparing dinner.

But God is moving everything toward the redemption of the world.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it sometimes easier to recognize God in a miracle than in ordinary providence?
 2. Where have you recently seen God work through seemingly normal circumstances?
 3. How would your daily life change if you truly believed God could be moving through ordinary acts of faithfulness?
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FINAL DISCUSSION

Return to Mark 14:16:

“They found it just as he had told them.”

Why might this small moment have been important preparation for everything the disciples were about to experience?

Jesus would soon tell them:

He would be betrayed.

They would scatter.

Peter would deny Him.

He would be killed.

He would rise again.

Everything would soon appear to be falling apart.

But the man had been there.

The house had been there.

The room had been ready.

Everything happened just as Jesus said.

Final Truth

The same Jesus who knew where the man with the water jar would be also knew where the entire story was going.

FINAL APPLICATION

Ask each person to complete these five statements:

1. The situation I need to trust Jesus with is _____.
 2. The next step I know I need to take is _____.
 3. The thing God has made clear that I need to focus on is _____.
 4. The thing God has already given me to steward is _____.
 5. The small act of obedience I will not dismiss as insignificant is _____.
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CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank You that You are never surprised and never out of control. Teach us to trust You when we cannot understand the whole story. Give us courage to obey the next step, wisdom to recognize what matters, faith to believe You are already at work ahead of us, and humility to remain faithful in small things. Help us remember that what looks ordinary to us may be carrying greater significance than we understand. Lead us, and give us hearts that follow. Amen.