

Small Group Guide

Mark 13: *Watchful, Not Worried*

Before You Begin

Invite someone to open in prayer. Ask group members to share one word that describes how they feel when they think about the future. Then read Mark 13:1-11 aloud together before diving into discussion.

Key Takeaways

1. We don't have to know what the future holds to trust the one who holds it.

Jesus does not give his disciples everything they want to know. He gives them everything they need to know, which is that he is trustworthy and that he will return.

2. Don't let uncertainty lead you into deception. When fear rises, so does the temptation to follow confident voices that claim more certainty than Jesus himself claimed. Jesus warns his followers to be on guard against this.

3. Don't mistake trouble for God's absence. Jesus prepares his disciples for suffering and persecution, not as a sign that God has failed them, but as an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak through them.

4. Don't let fear of tomorrow distract you from faithfulness today. The servant in Jesus's parable is given real work to do while his master is away; not only standing at the door to watch. Readiness looks like faithfulness, not paralysis.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. When you hear the word "eschatology" or phrases like "end times," what is your gut reaction? Curiosity, anxiety, confusion, or something else? Where do you think that reaction comes from?

2. The disciples asked Jesus two questions when he predicted the destruction of the temple: "When will this happen?" and "What will be the sign?" When something feels uncertain or threatening in your own life, what are the first questions you tend to ask?
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Going Deeper

3. The sermon introduced the *traffic light* framework for theological issues: green light issues where Christians broadly agree, red light issues that fall outside of biblical orthodoxy, and yellow light issues where sincere believers disagree. How does this framework help you approach a passage like Mark 13? Are there areas of your faith where you have struggled to hold your interpretations with open hands?
 4. Jesus says in Mark 13:7 that when his followers hear of wars and rumors of wars, they should not be alarmed. Yet he also describes genuinely terrifying events. How do you hold those two realities together? What does "not being alarmed" actually look like in practice?
 5. The sermon warned against letting uncertainty lead us into deception. Can you think of a time, either personally or in your observation of broader culture, when fear about the future made someone vulnerable to a voice that claimed more certainty than was warranted? What were the consequences?
 6. Jesus says in Mark 13:11 that when his followers are handed over and face trial, the Holy Spirit will speak through them. What does it mean to you that God would place his people in difficult circumstances specifically so that His message could reach people it might not otherwise reach? Does that change how you think about hardship in your own life?
 7. The sermon quoted C.S. Lewis's analogy of human history as a play in which we do not know whether we are in "Act I or Act V". How does that image sit with you? Does not knowing where you are in the story feel freeing, unsettling, or something else entirely?
 8. The sermon raised the concern that some end-times thinking can lead to apathy, a sense that it is pointless to invest deeply in this world if Jesus is returning soon. Have you ever felt that pull? How do you think a healthy expectation of Christ's return should actually shape the way we live and love right now?
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Practical Applications

This week, choose one of the following to put into practice:

- **Audit your information diet.** Pay attention to the voices you turn to when you feel anxious about the future. Are those voices pointing you toward trust in Jesus, or are they trading in fear and false certainty? Consider making one intentional adjustment to who or what you are listening to.
 - **Name your uncertainty.** Identify one area of your life right now where you genuinely do not know what is coming. Write it down. Then spend time in prayer specifically surrendering that uncertainty to God, not asking him to remove it, but asking him to help you trust him within it.
 - **Practice present faithfulness.** Based on where God has placed you right now, identify one concrete act of faithfulness you can carry out this week. It might be a conversation with a neighbor, a commitment to your family, a step of service in your community, or simply showing up with intention somewhere you have been tempted to check out of.
 - **Have a yellow light conversation.** Find someone in your group or your life who holds a different view on an eschatological question than you do. Have a genuine conversation with the goal of understanding their perspective rather than winning the argument. Practice the humility the sermon described.
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Closing Reflection

Read Mark 13:31 together as a group. The sermon noted that Jesus contrasts the permanence of his words with the impermanence of even the most impressive structures human beings can build.

Close by asking each group member to answer this question:

What is one thing you are tempted to build your security on that will not last, and what would it look like to anchor your trust more firmly in the words of Jesus instead?

Then close in prayer, asking God to give your group the courage to live faithfully in whatever act of the story you find yourselves in, trusting the Author with what you cannot see.