



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.

- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on March 17, 2024
by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

SURRENDERING OUR FUTURE – Mark 13



Prayer In Transition:

As we enter this transition of senior pastors at Grace Chapel, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for Pastor Bryan, Pastor Joshua, and Grace Chapel.

I. Introduction

I'd like to start with a brief, but important update. Joshua Clough has been officially voted in by our church membership to be our next senior pastor. I'm excited that God has called and prepared Pastor Joshua to lead our congregation into the future; a future that can be even brighter than our past.

Surrender is our theme for this Lenten season as we walk through the final chapter of Mark's gospel. So far we've talked about surrendering our tendencies toward self-preservation and promotion, surrendering our certainty and our need for control, surrendering our hope in religious systems and earthly structures. Today we'd like to talk about surrendering our future.

Question: What does it mean to surrender your future to God?

Bottom Line: Praying “Thy will be done” means surrendering our future to the power, purposes and promises of God, knowing that whatever the future holds, God can work with it, for good.

Let’s begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings:

Mark 13:1-37:

13 As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”

² “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

⁵ Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁸ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

⁹ “You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. ¹¹ Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

¹² “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ¹³ Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

¹⁴ “When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. ¹⁶ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁷ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ¹⁸ Pray that this will not take place in winter, ¹⁹ because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again.

²⁰ “If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. ²¹ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. ²² For false messiahs and false

prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²³ So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

²⁴ “But in those days, following that distress,

“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;

²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

²⁶ “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

²⁸ “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

³⁵ “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

II. Group Discussion Questions:

1. The future can feel especially uncertain these days. This can apply to the future of our nation(s), the American church and/or our church, our personal lives, etc.

- On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 indicating no anxiety and 10 indicating extreme anxiety, how are you feeling about the future?
- Does any of these futures particularly incite the most amount of fear, anxiety, or concern?

[Before diving into God's Word, consider pausing to surrender these topics and feelings before the Lord, welcoming His presence into the group meeting and asking God to speak His truth and promises.]

2. Read Mark 13:1-37 and do steps of the Inductive Bible Study together: Feel free to read/focus on sections (see example below where Mark 13 is divided into four sections).

- Section 1: Mark 13:1-8

V 5-8 "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains."

- What questions was Jesus responding to? (Note this was a private conversation between Jesus and the inner circle – Jesus, James, John, and Andrew).
- How did Jesus respond to their questions? What is Jesus saying? What is He NOT saying?
- What and how are we to apply Jesus' warnings today?

- Section 2: Mark 13:9-12

V 11 "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking but the Holy Spirit."

- Jesus warns his disciples will be witnesses on account of Him. The ability to preach the gospel does not lie on man's strength but on the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- Have you experienced the Holy Spirit using you to speak about Jesus?
- Do you know people who experienced persecution because of Christ?

- Section 3: Mark 13:14-26

V 23, 26 “So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time...²⁶ At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”

- How can Christians be on their guard today?
- How do you visualize the Son of Man coming with power and glory?

- Section 4: Mark 13:28-36

V 31-33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.”

3. Pastor Bryan said “if we knew when the end was coming, we’d be counting the days, instead of living the days.” Jesus’ words are meant to encourage us to live every day with expectancy and readiness.

- Read Mark 13:37 together.
- How are Jesus’ words meant to encourage us? What are some steps that you could take to begin each day with this attitude of expectancy of Jesus’ return?
 - Consider trying some of the spiritual practices (e.g., prayer, Scripture reading, solitude, fellowship).
 - Ask members of your small group for how they do it.

4. Surrender does not mean giving up our agency. It means exercising our agency by partnering with God to shape the future. Jesus said, “*It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.*” (Mark 13:34). God gave us work to do, every one of us, and he wants us to be engaged in that work until he returns to bring it all to completion.

- What special gift, talent or skill has God blessed you with? What special gift has God blessed your group member with?
- Discuss with your small group how you could use your gift to fulfill God’s purposes for our planet, nation, church, or your personal life.

5. **Pastor Bryan recounted the back story of Judson Van DeVenter, the man who wrote the hymn *I Surrender All*.** Billy Graham was so inspired by Judson's teaching and music that he used this hymn during his alter call at his crusades. Who knows how many tens and hundreds of thousands of people made a decision to follow Christ during the singing of that hymn? This exemplifies the generational impact of one person who surrendered his life to Christ.
 - Share with you group someone who has moved you in your journey towards Christ. Who was it? How did they influence you? What steps did you take?
 - Conversely, share a story about someone that you led to Jesus.
6. **Pastor Bryan gave some good examples of what surrender might look like when it comes to the future of our planet, the future of our nation, the future of the church and the future of our personal lives.**
 - As you close in prayer, take a moment to consider what might you need to surrender to God today? What fears or dreams do you have about the future? What problems or decisions are weighing on your mind and heart today?
 - Ask the Holy Spirit bring it to your mind, and then lift it up to the Lord. Let this surrender free you to take action to do God's work here and now.

Take Home Message:

What does surrender mean when it comes to our personal lives? It doesn't mean passively letting life happen to us and chalking it up to God's will. It doesn't mean obsessing over when Christ will return. **It means making the most of every day we're given, remembering that every one of us has been placed on this planet, in this time and this place, to glorify God in a way no other human being can.** It means placing our education, our careers, our finances, our loved ones, our health, and our eternal destiny in God's hands, knowing that nothing can separate us from His love and purposes, in this life or in the life to come.

III. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

The Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

IV. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

- The Day of the Lord: a coming day of divine intervention when God would break into human history to set things right in the world – to vanquish evil, to exalt Israel and to usher in a new age of peace and righteousness
- The disciples were asking 2 different questions in Mark 13:4:
 1. Tell us, when will these things happen?
 2. And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?
- Jesus answered these 2 separate questions, respectively:
 1. First to the immediate future in the 1st century, he refers to the wars, famines, earthquakes and persecution and the desecration of the Temple – all of which happened in the years leading up to 70AD
 2. Second to the distant future, at the end of the age, he refers to stars falling from the heavens, the glorious appearing of the Son of Man, and the gathering of all God's people into the new heavens and earth, he said there won't be any signs
- The *imminent* return of Christ: it could happen at any time; today, tomorrow, or a thousand years from now
- If we knew when the end was coming, we'd be counting the days, instead of living the days. We'd be making predictions instead of progress. We'd be waiting it out instead of working for the master.
- Surrender doesn't mean giving up or giving in, it means giving over. *It means taking our future and placing it in the hands of God*