



SERMON STUDY GUIDE
"Experiencing Grace"
For the sermon preached on 11/3:

From the text:
Matthew 24:3-13

How to use the Groups Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study that leads to practicing "the way of Jesus".

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method. In summary, this method stresses "**Observation**" (what the reader can see from the text), "**Interpretation**" (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and "**Application**" (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group. It's recommended that you rephrase the questions to match your voice and have an understanding of the interpretive questions as you prepare to lead and facilitate.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It's the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the LC Team

We are grateful to be experiencing another Global Awareness Week at Grace Chapel and this year's theme is "Grace Under Pressure." Tracking with our sermon series on the topic of grace, we want to remember the persecution and stress our brothers and sisters in Christ face throughout the world and recognize their bravery and faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus. But the reality is that all of us face different threats and challenges in life – all of us feel the pressure. By looking at the text that Reverend Jamie Taylor preached from on Sunday, we want to be mindful of how we as Christ-followers can move forward with the grace God gives in such times.

24 ³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

⁴ Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.

⁹ “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Matthew 24:3-13

O – It’s a normal human curiosity to wonder about the end of it all. Here the disciples ask Jesus about the “end of the age” and Jesus answers. Take a moment and point out the three descriptors that point to the end.

(The three are: Deception from false teachers, the threat of warfare, and a pattern of natural disasters.)

I – One of the beautiful features of this text is how Jesus compares all of this to birthing pains which begs the question, what is being birthed?

(This is another proclamation of Christ’s Kingdom. In effect Jesus keeps saying, there is a new world coming and the corruption and wickedness of the way of this world must give way to the shalom and love that God wants to usher in.)

Bridging the Context

A lot of bad theology has arisen from texts like these (in fact, certain televangelists have profited much from scaring the masses with doomsday predictions!). So we have to be careful today and not trip into adding meaning to the text while at the same time, avoiding missing what the text is actually saying.

There is a theological principle at work here that is often described as “two-fold prophecy.” Which means, Jesus is describing something that will happen soon in his setting and he is also speaking into and describing something that will continue to echo throughout history until its ultimate fulfillment.

To summarize, Jesus is predicting the destruction of Jerusalem which indeed happens in 70 A.D. and he is giving this prophecy to his disciples around 29 or 30 A.D. (just before his crucifixion). Jerusalem's destruction, with the Temple included, is understood as part of his judgment against an unbelieving Israel. But it is not to be confused with the Second Coming of Jesus (which we of course, are still awaiting). This involves numerous other passages but for our purpose today we want to see what Jesus tells his disciples as they face the mounting pressure of following him.

New Testament scholar and theologian, N.T. Wright tells us:

“The echoes of meaning rumble on in every successive generation of Christian discipleship. We too are called to be faithful, to hold on and not be alarmed. We too may be called to live through troubled times and to last out to the end. We too may see the destruction of cherished and beautiful symbols. Our calling then is to hold on to Jesus himself, to continue to trust him, to believe that the one who was vindicated by God in the first century will one day be vindicated before the whole world. We too are called to live with the birth pangs of God's new age, and to trust that in his good time the new world will be born.¹”

I/A – And so, how can we as Christ-followers and as a community stay on guard and avoid being deceived?

I/A – It seems that we are constantly hearing rumors of wars and experiencing a series of natural disasters. Yet, later in the same chapter, Matthew 24:36, Jesus tells us that no one knows the hour of which he will return. Many of us have witnessed waves of such events throughout our lifetimes.

How can we both avoid the hysteria of untrue doomsday prophecies and also live with a sense of urgency of Christ's return?

A - By remembering the theme of our Global Awareness week is “Grace Under Pressure” how can we live out such grace in the midst of our chaotic and destructive world?

In addition to the great answers given, remember that Jesus is telling his disciples to stand firm to the end despite persecution and a world that will continue to revolt in numerous ways. It's in this faithfulness that we continue to experience the Lord's grace until God's Kingdom has been fully revealed.

¹ Wright, T. (2004). [*Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16-28*](#) (p. 115). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

- a. Please note that not all these questions might be able to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your group the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your group.
- b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.