



the END TIMES

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **LISTEN WITHOUT FIXING AND TEACHING.** People desperately need a safe place to share their thoughts and be real with others. Give people space to talk without trying to fix them, correct their thoughts or teach. Choose the relationship over the desire to cast judgement or prove your point over theirs, to be "right".

Week 2: Signs Of The End Times

ICEBREAKER

What is your most anticipated day of the year and why? Ex. Birthday, Holiday, Event etc.

INTRODUCTION

From the moment it was first prophesied that Jesus would return, every generation has proclaimed that the time is near or now. Today, as it was back then, many Christians are wondering if the current times are the End Times. In this lesson, we will be looking at the signs and symptoms that Jesus and his apostles tell us will be shown and felt as the birth pains of Jesus coming. Let's dive into scripture and attempt to look around us for Signs of the End Times.

READ | **WHEN WILL JESUS RETURN?**

The first question to discover if we are in the End Times is; when will Jesus return? This is one of the most talked about events in the New Testament. Early Christians asked:

“Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” --2 Peter 3:4 (NIV)

Many first-century Christians believed that Jesus would come in their lifetime. As Christians began to die without His return, some began to doubt. False teachers, used that doubt to question whether Christ was real or ever going to return. To avoid this trap ourselves we must turn to the words of Jesus who reminds us:

“No one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.” --Matthew 24:36 (NLT)

No one will know the time, so do not stress about it! Jesus does not want us to lose our peace for prophesy as so many have in the past and present.

Do you feel anxiety or anticipation when it comes to the End Times? How does it make you feel knowing that the people of the bible likely felt the same way? Why do you think that the God who gives us everything we need, doesn't give us the time?

READ | SIGNS OF THE END TIMES: **GREAT PERSECUTION**

Although we aren't meant to know the time, the bible gives us plenty of things to look for as signs of the End Times. One of the first signs Jesus tells us to look for is great persecution of Christ followers. He said it this way:

*“But before all this occurs, there will be **a time of great persecution**. You will be dragged into synagogues and prisons, and you will stand trial before kings and governors because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me. Even those closest to you—your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends—will betray you.* --Luke 21:12-13,16 (NIV)

Even in 2023, there are many places around the world where Christians are openly arrested and abused for practicing their faith. We often take for granted the luxury we have to preach the Word and live openly in our Christian beliefs. Jesus' words in Luke are a call for conviction in our faith and a reminder that in the End Times, even those who love us will turn against us because of our devotion to Christ.

Have you faced persecution for your belief and faith in Jesus Christ? Share some tips, scriptures or actions you use to stay strong in your faith, in the face of adversity.

READ | SIGNS OF THE END TIMES: **WARS AND DISASTERS**

While Christians are being persecuted, the world will not have the peace of Christ. Jesus warns us of multiple signs we should look for, but not stress over, in those times.

*And when you hear of **wars** and **insurrections**, don't panic. Yes, these things must take place first, but the end won't follow immediately." Then he added, "Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be **great earthquakes**, and there will be **famines and plagues** in many lands, and there will be terrifying things and great miraculous signs from heaven. --Luke 21:9-11 (NIV)*

Turn on the news and you will see terrifying things happening all around the world. From a global pandemic to armed conflict in Europe with rumors of World War, to the earthquake in Turkey that killed tens of thousands, things appear to be getting worse.

Discuss a stressful time or process you had to go through. Did panicking help the situation or make things worse? How does your relationship with Christ and trust in God help you to find peace in the storm of recent turmoils?

READ | SIGNS OF THE END TIMES: **FALSE MESSIAHS**

Another clear sign foretold by Jesus and his apostles that the End Times are near will be false prophets claiming to be the messiah. Jesus said it this way:

"Don't let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah, and saying, 'The time has come!' But don't believe them." --Luke 21:8 (NLT)

The Jewish concept of a messiah is someone anointed to be King during the End Times. Claiming to be messiah would grant someone extreme influence and power over others. Jesus knew that as the world falls into times of distress, people will cry out for a savior and that bad actors would take advantage of this for their own benefit.

For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones. --Matthew 24:24 (NIV)

We are called to have our life led by Christ and no one else. Each failed messiah leads more of God's people into doubt about Christ's Word and away from God.

Has someone ever led you away from your walk with Christ? How do you ensure you are following Christ with all the distractions, deceivers and doubt in the world?

READ | *JESUS' RETURN WILL BE SUDDEN*

Jesus warned us against false security. That even if we properly interpret all the signs and determine that we are surely in the End times, His return will still come upon us suddenly. To illustrate this point Jesus uses the story of Noah and the great flood.

“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man.”

--Luke 17:26 (NIV)

In the days before the flood, life went on as usual for everyone except Noah and his family, who prepared. When it began to rain, the flood came swiftly and killed everyone.

Believers must always be ready for Christ's return, at a moments notice. When Jesus returns, there will be no second chances. We must prepare ourselves to be a vessel that will withstand the second coming by surrendering our lives to Christ daily and following Him to the best of our abilities.

How does it make you feel, hearing how suddenly Jesus will return? Do you feel you are ready if He were to return today? What can you do to be prepared for his return? (Ex. Accept Christ, work faithfully for Christ, share Christ with others, pursue Christ-likeness)

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

- This week, stay close to God's peace and purpose for your life by engaging in God's Word and with God's people.
- Be purposeful to separate your thought life from the anxiety and chaos of the world and steer it towards anticipation of His return.
- Begin a relationship with Christ if you haven't already, then surrender daily to his plans and work faithfully for Him.

ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS (Optional):

- Do the daily devotion S.O.A.P.S for this week on the next page.

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Dear Father, give me the strength, understanding and resolve to stay in Your will for my life. Thank You for giving Your Son to be my life leader and good Shepard. Help me to stay engaged in Your word and be renewed in my faith daily. Give me peace in Your presence from the stress and anxieties of this fallen world. I trust in Your timing and not in my own desires. Your ways are better than mine. In Jesus' name, amen.



Make Time to be in God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S - Scripture**
- O - Observation**
- A - Application**
- P - Prayer**

Here's an example:

S: *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*
--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

O: Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

A: Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

P: Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

--Matthew 24:21-22 (ESV)

Day 2:

...but the Lord rescued me from all of it. Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

--2 Timothy 3:11-12 (NLT)

Day 3:

That is why we can say without any doubt or fear, "The Lord is my Helper, and I am not afraid of anything that mere man can do to me."

--Hebrews 13:6 (TLB)

Day 4:

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

--2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)

Day 5:

"Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and people will not see his shame."

--3 John 1:4 (AMP)