**1. Motivate**

When have you been glad to know you were not really alone?

* struggling with a class
* at night when it was storming
* got to work and at first no one was there

A video introduction is available. Watch it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_0pz68o1j> If you have no wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/mr2ncd59>

* when the electricity went out
* when the water was off
* traveling by myself
* got lost at the state fair
* separated from my group at Disney World
* stuck in a traffic jam on the interstate
* phone went out of power
* when the kids all went off to college and we were empty nesters

**2. Transition**

Occasionally we might feel like we’re abandoned, even by God.

* But, even in the darkest times, God does not abandon His people.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Signs of the Coming End

Listen for a reference to Daniel.

Matthew 24:15-16 (NIV) "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-- 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

What prophetic announcement and prior historical event signal the future fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple?

* when the holy of holies in the temple is violated
* something so offensive to God happens in the temple
* Daniel spoke of it in his prophecy

What are some synonyms for the word “abomination”? (have class use their phones).

* outrage
* disgrace
* scandal
* eyesore
* atrocity
* horror
* hatred
* dislike
* repugnance
* loathing
* revulsion
* abhorrence
* detestation
* disgust

So, what is Jesus referring to when He talks about the *abomination* that takes place in the holy place that causes desolation?

* a terribly sacrilegious object will be placed on the altar in the temple
* it desecrates, defiles the altar
* could have been a pig sacrificed on the altar
* could have been some other item that is totally offensive to God

What counsel did Jesus give to those facing the threat of destruction?

* run away
* leave Jerusalem
* flee to the mountains
* you will not be safe staying there

Why do you think Jesus warned people to leave Jerusalem when these things happen?

* the opposition will be overwhelming
* these are the opening events for even worse things to come
* evil is culminating and no longer hidden – God will then deal with it dramatically

What are some of the things we often hear about the end times?

* terrible destruction
* awful inhumanities against believers
* the sign of the beast
* the number 666
* great war

What are the benefits of knowing the signs of the end-time?

* you are reminded to live like Jesus will come today
* and continue to evangelize and make disciples like Jesus will not come for many years
* motivates us for both long- and short-term faithfulness

These verses speak about the temple being violated. What might be some ways that churches could be similarly be treated – or have been treated in some countries?

* church building torn down
* church turned into a bar or some type of place for worldly entertainment
* church used for teaching athieism, to turn people away from God
* believers dragged into the church and tortured
* in some places all the believers in a village were shut up in the church and the building set on fire with them still in it

These verses are really heavy and full of suffering. What is the hope amidst the destruction?

* God is in control
* those who think they are powerful and in charge are not really
* God will bring justice and righteousness
* we should not give up hope – God will deal with the evil
* people have had plenty of opportunity to surrender to God, and have rejected God for the last time
* now He will come in final justice

3.2 Sudden Distress

Listen for effects on individuals.

Matthew 24:17-20 (NIV) Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. 18 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. 19 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! 20 Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.

What words and phrases affirm the urgency of fleeing the imminent dangers that came with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple?

* if you’re on the roof, don’t even go in the house to get something
* if you’re working out in the field, don’t go home first to get traveling clothes
* dreadful for traveling while pregnant or with a newborn

What do these verses suggest about the value of possessions in dangerous times?

* your “stuff” doesn’t matter much
* your life is more important
* get your priorities straight
* this reminds us somewhat of what the people of Ukraine are experiencing

How do you typically react when faced with the sudden onset of trouble?

* “When you worry, when you doubt, run in circles … scream and shout”
* keeps you awake at night
* you right away ask yourself, “Where is the rest of the family?”
* Who do I call?
* Where is my phone? Will the phone even work?
* “Let’s pray!”

How are Christians particularly equipped for seasons of difficulty?

* we are not alone
* God is with us
* We are assured of God’s presence, God’s power, God’s authority, and God’s love for us
* we have the personal presence in our lives of God’s Holy Spirit to guide, give wisdom, give strength

3.3 Distress Cut Short by God’s Mercy

Listen for both despair and hope.

Matthew 24:21-22 (NIV) For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again. 22 If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

What are some further words and phrases which express despair?

* great distress, unequaled distress
* more than ever before, more than will ever be in the future
* so bad God must call a halt

How does God display mercy in distressing circumstances?

* gives us strength to go on, provides our needs
* does not allow us to be tempted or suffer grief beyond our own limits
* because of our sin, we deserve punishment/judgment, but God’s mercy spares us from what we deserve

How has God’s mercy in the past helped you trust Him for the future? Remember, mercy is when God does not give us the punishment we deserve.

* God spared us from bad decisions – goofy things we did as young people
* God saw us through health problems
* He provided for needs
* our mistakes did not destroy us, God spared us

How does this prophecy display God’s nearness to His people?

* God reminds us that He is in control
* we are assured that He will accomplish His purposes … for us as individuals, as families, and as a church … as we submit and trust Him

What kinds of weariness and doubt are people facing right now?

* what’s going to happen to our nation?
* what’s going to happen to international conflicts … how will it affect us?
* health problems due to age
* prodigal, reckless children, grandchildren
* after effects of the Covid pandemic … health (physical and mental), economy, socially, family

How might you encourage one another in those things?

* faithful prayer

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

* notes of encouragement
* prayer-grams from the church prayer room
* visits to homebound folks

Application

Remember.

* Take a moment and remember all those times when the Lord was with you during a difficult or scary time.
* Spend some time in prayer thanking Him for always being with you.

Reflect.

* Take a moment and reflect on trials that you have faced recently.
* How did you respond during those trials? Were you prepared for them?
* Did you fully trust God during those trials, or did you let fear or your circumstances distract you?
* Spend some time in prayer asking God how you can learn from these trials.

React.

* Is there anything hindering your trust in God or preventing you from sharing the gospel.
* What is one step you can take this week to keep your focus on God and help you learn to trust Him more?



Crossword
Puzzle

I’m in here checking what’s coming. You need to finish this crossword. Remember, clues and words come from
Matt. 24:15 – 22. Help is available at <https://tinyurl.com/mr2ncd59> . There’s other cool family stuff there too.