

## Stories

### Be Prepared

**When it comes to Jesus' return and the end of the age, we must be prepared for both *suddenly* and to *persevere* (Matthew 25:1-13).** With the current Israeli war in Gaza, many people are wondering and asking: is this the end? Jesus was asked the same question by His disciples. He warns them strongly to be sure that no one leads them astray, and that no one knows the day or the hour except our Heavenly Father. Jesus then, using the Parable of the Ten Virgins, teaches about end times and His return. Because the precise timing of His return is known only by God, the appropriate question is not: is this the end? The right question is: are we ready? Whether Jesus returns today or beyond our lifetime, are we prepared either way? Regardless, we are called to contend in prayer against the demonic spirit of the day that desires to destroy the Jewish people (Psalm 122:6-8). The promise of Scripture is that God has not forsaken the Jewish people, and that a day is coming when they collectively embrace Jesus as their Messiah. When that happens, the world will experience an outpouring of even greater spiritual riches (Romans 11:11-12).

#### GET THINGS STARTED

How are you personally processing and understanding the Israeli war in Gaza? Are you following it closely, or are you more removed from the details? How do you think the war should impact us as followers of Jesus, if at all?

#### GO DEEPER

1. From the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, what is the key difference between the wise and foolish virgins? What point is Jesus making about the end of the age through this parable? How do we live wisely today, not knowing the day or hour of Jesus' return?
2. Why does Jesus warn His disciples in Matthew 24:4 to *watch out that no one deceives you* concerning His return and the end of the age? What are the right and wrong questions to ask about the end times?
3. According to Romans 11:11-12, 25-29, what is God's heart and promise towards the Jewish people, and what does this mean for those who are not Jewish?

#### MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. How would you rate your readiness for Jesus' return and the end of the age? How well are you prepared if He were to return today? What does it look like for you to persevere in readiness if He does not return in your lifetime?
2. What is your heart towards Israel considering their war in Gaza, and how open are you to contending for them in prayer against the demonic spirit that seeks to destroy them? Do you see them as victims, as aggressors, or something different? What might God be stirring in you concerning His heart and promises to the Jewish people?

#### PRACTICE IT NOW

**As a group, spend time in prayer together asking Jesus to make you ready for His return.** Ask Him to show you what that means, and what steps you should take practically and personally to be prepared for His possible sudden return or to persevere in waiting. Take time also to pray for the Jewish people (as well as non-Jews in Gaza), that they may come to know Jesus as their Savior and King in real and tangible ways. Contend in prayer against the demonic spirit that seeks to destroy the Jewish people.