This includes:
1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

### 1. LEADER PREPARATION

#### LESSON OVERVIEW
This week builds on the previous lesson by examining some application principles from our study of the End Times. It’s great to be familiar with biblical passages that talk about Jesus’ return or future events—but so what? How do these verses and truths affect teenagers’ lives today? That’s our focus in this lesson.

#### LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. **WHAT:** God’s incredible plans and designs for the universe can shape the way we live our daily lives.
2. **WHY:** Examining these plans and designs help us realize how God was, is, and will be intimately involved in creation—including our lives.
3. **HOW:** Encourage your teenagers to recognize how an understanding of the End Times provides clarity for today, hope for tomorrow, and gratitude for God’s plans and purposes.

#### PRIMARY SCRIPTURE
2 Thessalonians 2:15

#### SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

#### TEACHING PREP
The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your small group lesson.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

In this one verse, Paul said Christians can remain strong and faithful by remembering truth they have read, heard, and experienced. As we discussed in the previous lesson, any study of the End Times must emphasize one overriding message: In the end, God wins. And our knowledge of this fact fuels our confidence and faithfulness.

This week’s lesson covers some of the Scripture we discussed in the previous lesson. This isn’t our typical approach for a LIVE series, but we felt it was important to take extra time to examine how these passages are relevant to teenagers’ lives today.

Your students may have questions during this lesson that you can’t answer. That’s OK! Offer to research the question or encourage your students to do some research and see what answers they can find. You also may want to check with your youth pastor or senior pastor on additional resources that you could incorporate into your lesson.
THE BEFORE & AFTER [optional]

Text Message Questions
We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- How do the End Times relate to your life today? Come tonight to small group and get some answers.
- God sees the big picture and has a big plan, so what does that mean for your life? Let’s talk about it tonight at small group.

Parent Email
We’ve provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

This week our small groups concluded their two-week study on the End Times. We looked at some of the same passages as our first lesson, but our focus this time was on real-life application.

It’s great to be familiar with biblical passages that talk about Jesus’ return or future events—but so what? How do these verses and truths affect teenagers’ lives today? We discussed how an understanding of the End Times provides clarity for today, hope for tomorrow, and gratitude for God’s plans and purposes.

I’d encourage you to take a few minutes this week to talk with your teenager about our lesson. Here are some questions you could include:

- Jesus told his disciples to “keep watch” because they wouldn’t know exactly when he would return. How might people live or act differently if they knew exactly when Jesus will return, and why?
- How can knowing that Jesus will someday return affect your attitude about telling others about him?
- In your small group lesson, you talked about how an understanding of the End Times can provide clarity for today, hope for tomorrow, and gratitude for God’s plans and purposes. Which of these points had the biggest impact on you, and why?

Take a few minutes to pray that your student will continue growing spiritually by living and walking in God’s purposes and plans for life. Have a great week!
END TIMES
Week 2: Let Your Understanding Shape Your Life

2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [optional]
As you begin your small group, welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then jump right into this week’s lesson.

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you’d like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.

TEACHING POINTS
The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) It provides clarity for today, (2) It provides hope for tomorrow, and (3) It provides gratitude for God’s plans and purposes.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:15 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Last week, we looked at several passages from the Bible that talked about the End Times. This week, we tackle the important follow-up question: So what? How is all of this relevant to us today? In this one verse from 2 Thessalonians, Paul said Christians can remain strong and faithful by remembering truth they have read, heard, and experienced. Just like everything else in the Bible, the stuff about the End Times is important for us to study and discuss. Here are three ways that understanding more about the End Times matters to us.

1. It provides clarity for today

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Your long-term perspective on God, your life, and your purpose will shape your attitudes and actions today. As you spend time reading the Bible—including the sometimes unclear or confusing passages about the End Times—you can discover insight into how you can live your life today. Yes, that sounds weird: Read something confusing and find clarity. But it’s true. When we read about the End Times, we also discover the urgency of spreading the message of Jesus—a message of love and forgiveness and second chances.

ASK:
- In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Paul encouraged Christians to “stand firm and keep a strong grip” on biblical truth. How is this related to finding clarity for your life?
- Read Matthew 24:42-51. In this passage, Jesus told his disciples to “keep watch” because they wouldn’t know exactly when he would return. How might people live or act differently if they knew exactly when Jesus will return, and why?
• What are some of the implications and consequences of not knowing exactly when Jesus will return?
• Why do you think Jesus emphasized “faithfulness” in verses 45-51? What does it actually look like to be faithful?
• How can knowing that Jesus will someday return affect your attitude about telling others about him?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: God calls us to live faithful, consistent lives of faith. In other words, we are called to live TODAY as if Jesus were returning at any moment. It’s possible that Jesus won’t return tomorrow, but that doesn’t mean we won’t be ready!

2. It provides hope for tomorrow

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: When we talk about “hope” for tomorrow, we don’t mean the kind of hope you experience when you “hope” your parents will give you a birthday gift of a new video game system or a gift card to buy some new clothes. We’re talking about the “hope” that is the opposite of “despair.” That hope is found through a relationship with Jesus and a realization that someday we will spend eternity with him in heaven.

ASK:
• What are some ways people in your world—including your friends and family members—need hope?
• When you think about our world, do you feel more optimistic or pessimistic about its future? Explain.
• If you believe God is in control of End Times events, how does this affect your optimism or pessimism?

3. It provides gratitude for God’s plans and purposes

Video Clip [optional]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: God has a design and plan for all of creation—and when it comes to you and me, God never uses cookie-cutters to create people. Each of us is a unique person with a unique plan. Sometimes we run into challenges because of our uniqueness, as we see in this scene from Simon Birch (rated PG).

Start the DVD at 1:06:45, as Simon sits in the minister’s office. Stop the DVD at 1:08:15, as Simon leaves the office.

ASK:
• How do you relate to what Simon experiences in this scene? Does it remind you of how other people have spoken into your life? Explain.
• Do you ever worry about how other people will react to God’s specific plan for your life? Why or why not?
• Give us a quick summary of how you see God’s plan for your life. It’s OK if you don’t feel like you have all the answers or a final roadmap. Just talk about what you’ve seen so far and where you think God is leading you.
• Read Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 22:37-40, and Matthew 28:18-20. What do these three passages tell you about God’s plans and designs for your life? Which do you find easiest to believe or obey, and which do you find most difficult to believe or obey? Why?
• Read Hebrews 10:8-14. Why was Jesus the perfect sacrifice in our place? What did his birth, life, death, and resurrection demonstrate about God’s plans and designs for humanity?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: If you’ve been with us through a lot of our other small group series, you know how much we talk about God’s purposes and plans for your life. You’re not an accident. You were created with meaning and value. As you examine what the Bible says about the End Times and you realize God has a “big plan” for all of creation, you take steps toward experiencing a more complete, meaningful relationship with your creator.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [optional]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: God doesn’t want us to be separated from him for eternity; God wants us to spend eternity in his presence. But that all depends on the choices we make: If we receive the free gift of salvation, made possible through Jesus, then we will spend eternity with God—a place of perfect relationship with God. If we reject that gift of salvation through Jesus, the Bible says we won’t be with God for eternity.

ASK:
• God wants his children to be able to have access to him for eternity. How does knowing this impact your life right now?

• What does our inability to fully understand or predict all the details of the End Times say about our ability to fully understand God?

APPLICATION
Pair up with another person for these questions.

ASK:
• In this lesson, we talked about how an understanding of the End Times can provide clarity for today, hope for tomorrow, and gratitude for God’s plans and purposes. Which of these points had the biggest impact on you—which one did you need to hear the most, and why?

• In which of those three areas do you sense the greatest need for growth in your life? What are some steps you can take this week?

• How can we pray for each other as we grow in our understanding of God’s specific plans for our lives and master plan for the universe?

SUMMARY
End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.
FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]
Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

*With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you both in person and by letter (2 Thessalonians 2:15).*