



Your Kingdom Come March 2 | Group Guide (Men)

Opening questions (for mixed groups beginning their time together) (10 minutes)

1. Where did you sense the Holy Spirit stirring you during the sermon on Sunday?
2. (For men to answer) What can you share that would be helpful for the women in your group to hear from your *Fighting Shadows* reading this week?

Pray for your time together. Invite one of the men to pray for the women's discussion and one of the women to pray for the men's discussion.

Dismiss to your separate discussion locations.

Here we are in Week 3 already. As you circle up with each other, may you remember how deep the gift of friendship is and may you experience the rich blessing of walking in step with your brothers.

Guiding Principles:

1. *Grace – We receive one another with a heavy dose of grace ... Jesus' words "neither do I condemn you" set the tone here. This is a space where honesty and vulnerability are essential. There is no hiding here.*
2. *Brevity – No one should dominate the space. Keep your sharing honest, deep and succinct so everyone has time to share.*
3. *Ask questions – Rather than give advice, ask, "Is there anything more you'd like to say about this? What do you need from us right now? How can we pray for you?"*



4. *High calling – Call one another to holiness (cheer each other on and hold one another to a high standard ... “Go and sin no more!”)*

Ask someone in your group to read 1 John 4:7-11:

⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Key Idea: We are made in God’s image, and we can only be faithful image bearers if we are in community. When we are, the kingdom of heaven will be found there and the shadow of loneliness will have no power over your heart.

Questions for discussion:

- If you could watch one movie for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?
- What is something you are more passionate about today than you were five years ago? What is something you are less passionate about today than you were five years ago? How are these shifts shaping who you are?
- Is there a season in your life when you have been lonely? Describe what that was like?



- Look at pp. 46-47. Take a few minutes and write out a response to this question:
 - If you could create a “gathering in your own image,” where would you meet and what would it look and feel like?
 - What are the most important 2 questions you would ask?
 - Who would you want to invite?
- Allow for everyone to take a few moments to write out their response and then share it. Once everyone shares, ask this: “What is keeping you from pulling off a gathering like this?”
- Ask, “How can we be a band of brothers with each other?”

Take Away: Schedule a time just with each other to go do something fun (pickleball, hot wings, a campout, time around the fire, etc.).

Finish by praying for one another: As you reflect on what has been shared through the course of the evening, take time to pray for each man in the circle.

Your Kingdom Come

March 2 | Leader Guide (Women)

For the weeks of February 16 – April 6, life group content will be different for men and women. The men will spend time discussing the book Fighting Shadows while the women will continue a study of Matthew, with a special emphasis on prayer.

In this guide, you will find **leader’s notes** with helpful information to explain the rhythm of the evening. We encourage you to read these notes *before* group starts.

You will also find **specific instructions** for how to guide members of your life group through each experience *during* your meeting in *italics*.

Anything that you need to say/read to the group during your meeting time will be in regular type. You may of course put these thoughts in your own words.



Encourage each member of your group to print or download this week's participant's guide; if possible, you may wish to provide a copy for each person.

Opening questions (for mixed groups beginning their time together) (10 minutes).

1. Where did you sense the Holy Spirit stirring you during the sermon on Sunday?
2. (For men to answer) What can you share that would be helpful for the women in your group to hear from your *Fighting Shadows* reading this week?

Pray for your time together. Invite one of the men to pray for the women's discussion and one of the women to pray for the men's discussion.

Dismiss to your separate discussion locations.

Listening to God's Word (15 minutes).

If you omitted the opening questions, this would be a good time to ask your group for what stood out to them from the sermon on Sunday.

As we read and listen to this week's passage, pay attention to the different expectations people place on Jesus and notice how he responds.

Read the following sections of Matthew 12 out loud: 12:1-14, 12:15-21, 12:22-37, 12:38-45, and 12:46-50. After each section, ask the following questions:

- Who has expectations of Jesus in this passage? What are their expectations?
- How does Jesus respond to these expectations?
- How do their expectations get in the way of seeing what Jesus is really doing?

Leader's Note: If you or people in your group are having trouble finding the expectations placed on Jesus in Matthew 12, pointing them toward the verses below may help:



- In verse 2 and verse 10, the Pharisees declare their displeasure that Jesus and his followers are not fulfilling the Pharisees' expectations for Sabbath keeping.
- In verses 15-21, Matthew shows how Jesus fulfills Old Testament expectations for what the Messiah will do.
- In verse 24, the Pharisees demonstrate their unwillingness to admit that Jesus is from God; they would rather accuse him of being aligned with Satan than to rethink their expectations of how the Messiah will act.
- In verse 38 the Pharisees expect Jesus to perform signs on demand.
- In verses 46-47, people expect Jesus to prioritize the demands of biological family over spiritual family.

Praying through God's Word (15 minutes).

It's easy to judge the Pharisees. They are holding on to their own misplaced expectations of Jesus that they can't see the ways he is even more than they imagined or expected. They are stuck in their anger and disappointment.

What about us? What expectations do we place on Jesus? Are these expectations based on who he really is or our own wishes? Take a moment to reflect on your expectations of Jesus. Write your expectations down in the space provided.

Look back at what you've written. Invite Jesus to show you ways in which who he really is differs from who you expect him to be.

Provide several minutes for this time of reflection before moving into a time of guided prayer.

Sometimes our unspoken and unacknowledged expectations can cause big problems in our relationships, even in our relationship with Jesus. Let's spend some time together telling Jesus about our expectations of him.

Open space for a time of prayer. When the prayers draw to a close, pray something like, "Lord, we bring our expectations to you. Help us not to be blinded by our



expectations like the Pharisees. We surrender our expectations to you and invite you to show us who you really are.”

Guide your group in a time of reflection.

- What do you notice as you examine your expectations of Jesus?
- What fresh understanding of him is Jesus inviting you to now?

Encourage people to spend time this week examining the expectations they identified in light of what Scripture teaches about Jesus.

Prayer for Men’s Study (10 minutes)

This week in *Fighting Shadows*, the men are talking about the shadow of loneliness. Tyson and Bethke explain that many men struggle to develop close friendships, which leaves them feeling “dangerously numb.” According to research, three factors lead to strong friendships: proximity, unplanned interactions, and vulnerability.

If you have time, consider asking how everyone would evaluate your group for proximity, unplanned interactions, and vulnerability.

Let’s spend some time praying for the men to develop and grow strong friendships that contribute to their emotional and spiritual health.

Encourage married women to pray for wisdom to provide opportunities for their husbands to invest in male friendship.

Invite the women to a time of prayer.

Closing (5 minutes).

Feel free to join the men for this closing time if that’s a practical option for your group. Matthew 12 invites us to examine our expectations of Jesus. We will close with a



Scripture prayer that reminds us that He is beyond our comprehension and will surpass every expectation.

Read Romans 11:33-36 as a prayer over your group. (Feel free to invite someone else to read/pray it instead.)

Your Kingdom Come March 2 | Participant Guide (Women)

Overview

For the weeks of February 16 – April 6, life group content will be different for men and women. The men will spend time discussing the book *Fighting Shadows* while the women will continue a study of Matthew, with a special emphasis on prayer.

Opening questions (for mixed groups beginning their time together)

1. Where did you sense the Holy Spirit stirring you during the sermon on Sunday?
2. (For men to answer) What can you share that would be helpful for the women in your group to hear from your *Fighting Shadows* reading this week?

Your group leader may guide a time of prayer before the men and women separate.

Listening to God's Word

As we read and listen to this week's passage, pay attention the different expectations people place on Jesus and notice how he responds.

Your leader will invite different people to read the following sections of Matthew 12: 12:1-14, 12:15-21, 12:22-37, 12:38-45, and 12:46-50. After each section, answer the following questions:

- Who has expectations of Jesus in this passage? What are their expectations?



- How does Jesus respond to these expectations?
- How their expectations get in the way of seeing what Jesus is really doing?

Praying through God's Word

It's easy to judge the Pharisees. They are holding on to their own misplaced expectations of Jesus that they can't see the ways he is even more than they imagined or expected. They are stuck in their anger and disappointment.

What about us? What expectations do we place on Jesus? Are these expectations based on who he really is or our own wishes? Take a moment to reflect on your expectations of Jesus. Write your expectations down in the space provided.

Look back at what you've written. Invite Jesus to show you ways in which who he really is differ from who you expect him to be.

Sometimes our unspoken and unacknowledged expectations can cause big problems in our relationships, even in our relationship with Jesus. As a group, you will spend some time together telling Jesus about our expectations of him.

- What do you notice as you examine your expectations of Jesus?
- What fresh understanding of him is Jesus inviting you to now?

Prayer for Men's Study

This week in *Fighting Shadows*, the men are talking about the shadow of loneliness. Tyson and Bethke explain that many men struggle to develop close friendships, which leaves them feeling "dangerously numb." According to research, three factors lead to strong friendships: proximity, unplanned interactions, and vulnerability.

Spend some time praying for the men to develop and grow strong friendships that contribute to their emotional and spiritual health.



Closing

Matthew 12 invites us to examine our expectations of Jesus. We will close with a Scripture prayer that reminds us that he is beyond our comprehension and will surpass every expectation. Someone can close your time by reading Romans 11:33-36 as a prayer over your group.

Your Kingdom Come March 2 | Couple's Discussion

To help us stay connected with our spouse during these weeks when Life Groups are separated by gender, we are providing a small conversation piece for couples. Our hope is that you will take a moment, whether it's brief or a night out to dinner, and check in with each other and see how our lessons may be connected, how we can pray for each other, and what Jesus is doing in our life.

In 1967, when the first Super Bowl was played, people who gathered for the game ate Jello Salad and cheese balls. This year you feasted on chips; lots, and lots, and lots of chips. Of PepsiCo's \$92 billion dollars of sales in 2024, 25% was from Frito-Lay; and their number one sales season is the Super Bowl. 20% of their Super Bowl season sales come within six hours of kickoff...advertisers have done a great job telling us we *need* salty snacks to watch the Super Bowl!

The reality, however, is this: We don't actually need those snacks to have fun watching the game!

And here's the thing: those same advertisers, along with various other sources (e.g. television executives, social media gurus, authors, and sometimes even friends) can often lie to us about what matters most in our marriage.

Like the Pharisees in Matthew 12, we have fallen for some of those lies and are missing what God promises us. Some of those lies seem believable or seem easier than what we know to be true. When we try to go against the lies of this world, we need friends in our corner to help us because we are not created to fight these battles alone. We need



friends who are seeking a deep relationship with Jesus, who are not afraid to help us up when we fall or tell us when we are making mistakes or bad decisions. We need friends who love God and love us!

1. Do you see anything in your life that everyone seems okay with, but you know goes against God's will? What? How has that affected your marriage?
2. Is there a couple you know that love God and love others who you can invite to dinner?
 - a. If not, what are some ways you can meet new friends at church?
3. Pray together three times this week, asking Jesus to give you Godly friendships to do life with.