



## Your Kingdom Come March 16 | 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.***

As you begin, read this quote from G.K. Chesterton with the subsequent introduction. Then, go over the group's guiding principles.

G.K. Chesterton said, "Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God." The fact is, any of our disordered sexual appetites reveal our hunger to be seen, known, and loved by God. Some men have been waiting for this chapter and the following discussion for weeks now, just hoping that there is help. Others are trying to figure out how to avoid showing up for the conversation this week because of fear of stepping into the light. And thankfully some men bear witness to the life-transforming gift of receiving God's grace in an area where they were in bondage to sexual addiction. Gentlemen, show up fully, honestly, and with hope. God can redeem your life, no matter how deep and dark it has been for you. Today is the day of salvation!

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 to read 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 and another to read the key idea below:**

**1 Corinthians 6:12-18,** <sup>12</sup> "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup> You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup> By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. <sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." <sup>17</sup> But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

<sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.



**Key idea:** Our sexuality is not only a gift from God, but it is also a divine tool for our formation. Cultivating sexual integrity in our lives shapes us more into the image of Jesus, who demonstrates the richness of sacrificial love and relational fidelity. And Jesus offers us a route out of the shadows of lust and offers healing from the addiction and shame of sexual sin so we can live the kind of life God has for us now.

**Pray together for your conversation.**

This is a sacred moment. A moment to notice God's presence. To notice the hearts of men in this circle. To notice our deep need for God and others. So, take a few moments in silence to acknowledge this.

Out of the silence, a few men in the circle can pray to commit this important time to God.

**Check in with one another and reflect on the following questions from Chapter 5:**

1. What is one idea or quote that stood out to you from this week's reading and why?
2. What did you grow up thinking about how God felt about sexuality? How have these views shaped the way you have experienced sexuality in your own life?
3. Of all the shadows named in this book, how powerful is the shadow of lust compared to the others?
4. How have you sensed God responding to you in your struggles with lust (either historically or currently)?
5. Review the cycle of sexual failure on page 90:



*Try Harder:* Fail. Quit. Shame.

*Try Harder:* Fail. Quit. Guilt.

*Try Harder:* Fail. Quit. Sadness.

In what ways do you resonate with this cycle?

What does it look like for you to “spin out” of the cycle?

6. Lust is such a powerful force for a variety of reasons, but the good news is that sin is not our master because we are under the grace of Jesus (Romans 6:14).

And God’s grace is more powerful than the enemy’s schemes, our addictions, or our own inclinations to sin. So, we don’t need to live in hiding. In fact, hiding will never help us overcome sin. We must bring it into the light if we want to be set free (1 John 1:9). With this in mind, is there any area of sexual infidelity you have been hiding in the shadows (unfaithfulness to your wife/girlfriend, pornography, daydreaming about other women, etc.)?

7. What are some best practices you have found to help you resist sexual temptations?

8. On page 105, it says that “our quest for sex is ultimately not a quest for pleasure; it’s a quest for union, a quest for belonging, a disguised search for God.” What do you most need from God right now regarding sexual holiness and how can we pray for each other?

**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.



## A Helpful Resource:

Complete Holiness is a ministry dedicated to help Christian men break free from porn and step into their God-given purpose. To learn more about hope for the hopeless, brotherhood for the isolated and strength to rise up under the pressure, check out [completeholiness.org](http://completeholiness.org). The founder of this organization, Will Frazier lives just outside of Indianapolis and attended the conference with us last month. Not only has Will fought this battle against lust and pornography addiction in his own life, but he has been contending on behalf of other men for years. You can email Will directly at [will@completeholiness.org](mailto:will@completeholiness.org).

## Your Kingdom Come March 16 | 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. What did God's Word from the sermon this past week challenge you with? What resonated? What did it stir in you?



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.*

### **Experiencing God's Word (30 minutes).**

*This week we are looking at two chapters in Matthew. If time allows, read all Matthew 14-15 out loud, dividing the reading among group members.*

*Before you begin reading, ask someone to pray and invite the Holy Spirit to speak through the words. Consider reminding your group that when you read the Bible, the Author is in the room with you!*

*Encourage everyone to follow along in their Bibles (or phones), highlighting anything that stands out to them.*

*When the reading is complete, ask the following questions:*

- What moments stood out to you as we read?
- What patterns or points of emphasis did you notice?
- How did Jesus display his power and truth in these chapters?

*Let's spend some time praising God for the power and truth we encounter in these chapters. Feel free to share a word, phrase, or sentence of praise to God.*

*Lead your group in a time of prayer of praise.*

These chapters contrast worldly power with eternal power. Herod displays his authority by having John the Baptist beheaded (14:10). The Pharisees and teachers of the law use their religious authority to criticize Jesus for not following their strict practices



(15:2). But their claims to power look pathetic and ridiculous next to the wisdom and miraculous power of Jesus.

- Jesus performs four miracles in Matthew 14-15 (feeding the 5000, walking on water, healing the Canaanite woman's daughter, and feeding the 4000). What do each of these miracles reveal about Jesus' power and priorities?
- How do the people who witness or experience each miracle respond?

Let's take another look at Jesus' interaction with the Canaanite woman.

*Read Matthew 15:21-28.*

This passage is one of several times in the Gospels when Jesus has a conversation with a woman who is excluded from Jewish society in some way. (The bleeding woman in Matthew 9:20-22, the sinful woman who anointed him in Luke 7:36-50, the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, and the woman caught in adultery in John 8:2-11.)

- All of us have experiences where we've felt like an outsider. Can you share a time when you felt like an outsider?
- What do you notice about the conversation between Jesus and the Canaanite woman?
- What can we learn from her about approaching Jesus with our needs?

Matthew is drawing our attention to the contrast between the religious leaders of Israel, who reject Jesus, and the Canaanite woman, who has "great faith" in him. In the minds of Matthew's original audience (many of whom were Jewish believers), the contrast could not be greater between Jewish men in positions of authority and a pagan woman. Yet she recognizes him and trusts him even though they do not.

- The Pharisees trusted in their power and position. The Canaanite woman was willing to beg Jesus for her healing. Which posture do you find yourself taking toward Jesus?
- What prevents you from posturing yourself more like the Canaanite woman?

If you encountered Jesus, what would you kneel before him and ask for? We can kneel before Jesus just as the Canaanite woman did, asking him for the deepest desires of our heart. Where do you need to say, "Lord, help me!"?



*Invite your group to pray for the areas where they need Jesus to help them. If appropriate and physically possible, encourage people to kneel just as the Canaanite woman did.*

### **Prayer for Men's Study (15 minutes).**

**Leader's Note:** The topic of male lust and the pain it often inflicts on women is a sensitive one. And of course, many women struggle with lust, too. Be sensitive to your group and consider a private follow-up conversation with anyone who seems to have an intense reaction to this moment.

This week, *Fighting Shadows* addresses the shadow of lust. This may be an uncomfortable or painful topic for us to contemplate, but it is undeniably a shadow that dominates many men's lives and is an immense obstacle to healthy relationships. They argue that "sex is ultimately not a quest for pleasure; it's a quest for union, a quest for belonging, a disguised search for God." Men struggle to admit it, but they ache to be "vulnerable and accepted, known and loved, seen and celebrated. Sexuality is a reminder of the true source of our acceptance and love" (105).

Let's pray . . .

- That the men in our lives and the men of The Creek will be freed from the shadow of lust.
- That God would bring healing to people and relationships damaged by lust.
- That all of us would come to understand our sexuality as a gift from God that ultimately is a signpost to the intimacy he desires for us to have with him.

### **Closing (5 minutes).**

*Read (or have someone read) Ephesians 3:14-21 as a closing prayer over your group.*





## **Your Kingdom Come**

### **March 16 | Participant 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.

#### **Opening questions (for mixed groups beginning their time together).**

1. What did God's Word from the sermon this past week challenge you with? What resonated? What did it stir in you?
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.*

#### **Experiencing God's Word.**

Read Matthew 14 – 15 out loud if time allows. Consider highlighting or underlining moments that stand out to you.

- What moments stood out to you as we read?
- What patterns or points of emphasis did you notice?
- How did Jesus display his power and truth in these chapters?

Spend some time praising God for the power and truth you encounter in these chapters. Feel free to share a word, phrase, or sentence of praise to God.

- Jesus performs four miracles in Matthew 14-15 (feeding the 5000, walking on water, healing the Canaanite woman's daughter, and feeding the 4000). What do each of these miracles reveal about Jesus' power and priorities?
- How do the people who witness or experience each miracle respond?

Read Matthew 15:21-28, looking at Jesus' interaction with the Canaanite woman.

This passage is one of several times in the Gospels when Jesus has a conversation with a woman who is excluded from Jewish society in some way. (The bleeding woman in



Matthew 9:20-22, the sinful woman who anointed him in Luke 7:36-50, the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, and the woman caught in adultery in John 8:2-11.)

- All of us have experiences where we've felt like an outsider. Can you share a time when you felt like an outsider?
- What do you notice about the conversation between Jesus and the woman?
- What can we learn from her about approaching Jesus with our needs?

Matthew is drawing our attention to the contrast between the religious leaders of Israel, who reject Jesus, and the Canaanite woman, who has "great faith" in him. She recognizes him and trusts him even though they do not.

- The Pharisees trusted in their power and position. The Canaanite woman was willing to beg Jesus for her healing. What prevents you from posturing yourself more like the Canaanite woman?

If you encountered Jesus, what would you kneel before him and ask for? We can kneel before Jesus just as the Canaanite woman did, asking him for the deepest desires of our heart. Where do you need to say, "Lord, help me!"?

Pray together for areas where you need Jesus to help. Consider kneeling, if possible.

### **Prayer for Men's Study.**

This week, *Fighting Shadows* addresses the shadow of lust. This may be an uncomfortable or painful topic to contemplate, but it is undeniably a shadow that dominates many men's lives and is an obstacle to healthy relationships. Let's pray . . .

- That the men in our lives and of The Creek will be freed from the shadow of lust.
- That God would bring healing to people and relationships damaged by lust.
- That all of us would come to understand our sexuality as a gift from God that ultimately is a signpost to the intimacy he desires for us to have with him.



## **Closing.**

Someone will read Ephesians 3:14-21 as a closing prayer over your group.

## **Your Kingdom Come March 16 | 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.

On May 7, 1995, Reggie Miller scored 8 points in 9 seconds to help the Pacers beat the New York Knicks—it was unbelievable! Moments like this stick in our minds, burning into our memories. And if the moment is personal, it changes us.

In Matthew 14 and 15, we read about some incredible moments. There are 5,000 men without food to eat, yet Jesus uses the disciples to feed them all with just two fish and five loaves of bread. Jesus walks on water—and even helps Peter do the same. He heals a woman's daughter. Then, when 4,000 men need to be fed, Jesus and the disciples provide for them with seven loaves and a few fish. These stories are **AMAZING** to read and reflect on. If we take the time to consider what Jesus does in these moments, *it changes how we think, what we trust, and what we believe is possible.*

Within marriage, we have been given a gift that unites us as one—sex. It is a blessing that allows us to bond with our spouse like no other relationship can. It is a precious gift. Yet socially, sex is often reduced to a means of selfish gratification. We are told we can sleep with whomever we want, whenever we want, watch whatever we want, and that—if it's consensual—there are no consequences. *Many of us recognize the lie in that message.*

In many marriages, we have allowed sex to become a wedge between partners instead of a gift that brings us together as one. Shame, **lust**, pornography, abuse—these and



many other things have cast a shadow over a beautiful gift. The same Jesus who performed the miracles we just read about wants to transform our marriages, too. *How different would our marriage be if we trusted Jesus for forgiveness, freedom from shame, healing from trauma, and the ability to fully enjoy our sexuality as he designed?*

1. Is sexual sin, past or present, interfering with your marriage?
2. Do you have trauma that needs to be processed and healed?
3. Pray together five times this week, asking Jesus to help you live “as one” with your spouse.

If you need help this, or any topic, view a [compiled list of resources](#) The Creek has assembled.