



Your Kingdom Come March 30 | Group Guide (Men)

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?

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. Then, dismiss to your separate discussion locations.

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was the founder and king of Corinth. Hades punished him by forcing him to roll a large boulder up a hill only for it to roll back down every time it neared the top, repeating this action for eternity. This is a picture of futility. This is what it's like when we sense that what we do has no impact, it doesn't matter, and it doesn't accomplish anything. And futility has a way of stripping us of the dignity of a joy-filled life.

Guiding principles for the conversation:

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 Ephesians 2:8-10.

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do

Key idea: When identity, meaning, and purpose are hard to come by, the shadow of futility sets in. The sense of futility drains us of our passion and robs us of living into our unique, God given call.

Prayer together for your conversation.

What we do and how we live matters. As you pray for your conversation tonight, ask God to awaken your sense of his meaningful work in your life and your meaningful work in the world.

Check in with one another and reflect on the following questions from Chapter 7:

1. What is one idea or quote that stood out to you from this week’s reading and why?
2. How would you describe what it means to live “a life of consequence”?
3. Reflect on a time when your work or efforts made a meaningful impact. How did this experience shape your understanding of what it means to serve and heal the world?
4. The authors state on page 146 that in order to fight futility, “we need men with codes.” And they suggest that a code doesn’t emerge in the time of crisis, rather, “it must already be there, embedded deep in your soul, if it’s going to have any effectiveness in a moment of crisis.” You may not have a written-out



code for your life, but what are some words or values that shape the code you're living by?

5. How do you understand God's calling in your life?
6. In what ways does play, or lack of play impact the way you live your life?

Finish by praying for one another.

Ask each man in your group to offer a prayer for the person on his right. Pray that God will give him a sense of purpose, hope and energy to carry out God's vision for his life.

Your Kingdom Come

March 30 | 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 focuses on Matthew 18 – 20. Rather than attempt a deep dive into all three chapters, we will look together at a few key moments.

Before we begin, will someone pray for our hearts and minds to receive what the Word and the Spirit will reveal to us? *Invite someone to pray.*

Moment 1: The Vulnerable

Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 18:1-5, Matthew 18:6-12, and Matthew 19:13-14.

The disciples asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" In response, he invites a child into their midst and proceeds to challenge their hierarchical values.

In 18:3-5 and 19:14, Jesus emphasizes the connection between being like a child and entering the kingdom of heaven, as well as the importance of welcoming children into His presence.

- What childlike qualities is Jesus inviting us to possess? Why are these qualities important to people who want to be "great" in the kingdom of heaven?

In 18:6-9, Jesus gives dire warnings about drawing one of "those who believe" in him into sin. And 18:10-14 emphasize the importance of their safety and salvation.

- Is there a time when someone who you looked up to caused you to "stumble"?
- Why do you think Jesus has especially strong warnings for such people?

Moment 2: The Sinful

Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 18:12-20 and Matthew 18:21-35.



- How quick are you to think of God as the rejoicing shepherd who is happier about the one who was lost than the 99 who never wandered away?
- What does Jesus teach us about how to address the sin of other believers?
- After Jesus provides instructions for confronting sin, he tells a parable about forgiving sinners. What stands out to you about this parable?
- Which is more challenging for you: confronting sin or forgiving sinners? Why?

As we read these verses, it is highly likely that God is inviting us to have a “restoration conversation” with someone stuck in sin or to confront our own similarity to the unmerciful servant and challenge us to greater forgiveness.

Spends a few moments meditating on these passages and silently praying in response to the following prayer prompts.

Read each prompt, then provide a space of silence for prayer and reflection.

Prompt 1: Is there someone God in your life who is caught in sin whom God is inviting you to go and speak to? Ask God for wisdom and courage.

Prompt 2: Are you withholding forgiveness from someone in your life because the wrong they did seems too big to forgive? Reflect on the debt of sin God has taken from you and ask for His strength to forgive.

As you sense this time drawing to a close, conclude with a prayer asking for each person to walk in obedience to what God has shown them.

If you have time, invite people to share what God brought to mind in prayer.

Leader’s Note: Some people mistakenly believe that to forgive someone is to deny that the person did anything wrong – to sweep sin under the rug. True forgiveness is the *opposite* of that. Forgiveness involves recognizing that a wrong was done and releasing our right to punish. As Jesus makes clear in Matthew 18:15-17, God does not ask us to ignore sin. But he does command us not to “repay evil for evil” or “take revenge” but “leave room for God’s wrath” (Romans 12:17, 19). Peter explains that Jesus suffered without retaliation because “he entrusted himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23). God is the one who is qualified and equipped to render just judgements.

For people who have experienced deep wounds – abuse, abandonment, unfaithfulness – part of what makes forgiveness challenging is the idea that great evil would be let “off the hook.” The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant invites us to be reminded of the great debt



Jesus paid for us. Those who sin against us will face God's judgment and experience his wrath – or his mercy – based on their acceptance of Christ's blood, not on their own merit. Just as we will.

A word of warning: as people are invited to reflect on those God might be inviting them to confront about sin, it is easy for conversation to shift into gossip about that sinning person. A reminder that the sin should be confronted "just between the two of you" (verse 15) and not discussed in the group may be necessary.

Moment 3: The Seeking

Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 19:16-24 and Matthew 20:29-34.

- What is the rich man in Matthew 19 seeking from Jesus?
- Did he get what he came for? Why or why not?
- What were the blind men in Matthew 20 seeking from Jesus?
- Did they get what they came for? Why or why not?

Both the rich man and the blind men want something from Jesus. But only the blind men position them to receive what Jesus has to give.

Jesus asks the blind men, "What do you want from me?" (20:32). Imagine Jesus asked you that right now: What do you want from me? How would you answer? Let's tell him what we want from him together in prayer.

Invite women to "pray their requests" out loud, answering the question, "What do you want from me?"

Prayer for Men's Study (15 minutes).

This week in *Fighting Shadows* the men are reading about the shadow of futility – the struggle to find meaning in work and a sense of purpose in life while still making time for "play."

Let's pray that men at The Creek will:

- Discover and pursue the calling God has placed on their lives to use their specific gifts, passions, and experiences for God's glory.
- Recognize their need for rest and play rather than falling prey to workaholism.



- Root their identity and purpose in Christ so that in moments of crisis they respond with

wisdom and virtue.

Closing (5 minutes).

Have someone read Romans 11:33-36 over your group as a closing prayer.

Your Kingdom Come

March 30 | 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.

Moment 1: The Vulnerable

Read Matthew 18:1-5, Matthew 18:6-12, and Matthew 19:13-14.

- What childlike qualities is Jesus inviting us to possess? Why are these qualities important to people who want to be "great" in the kingdom of heaven?
- Is there a time when someone who you looked up to caused you to "stumble"?
- Why do you think Jesus has especially strong warnings for such people?

Moment 2: The Sinful

Read Matthew 18:12-20 and Matthew 18:21-35.



- How quick are you to think of God as the rejoicing shepherd who is happier about the one who was lost than the 99 who never wandered away?
- What does Jesus teach us about how to address the sin of other believers?
- After Jesus provides instructions for confronting sin, he tells a parable about forgiving sinners. What stands out to you about this parable?
- Which is more challenging for you: confronting sin or forgiving sinners? Why?

Meditate on these passages and silently pray in response to the following prompts.

Prompt 1: Is there someone God in your life who is caught in sin whom God is inviting you to go and speak to? Ask God for wisdom and courage.

Prompt 2: Are you withholding forgiveness from someone in your life because the wrong they did seems too big to forgive? Reflect on the debt of sin God has taken from you and ask for his strength to forgive.

Moment 3: The Seeking

Read Matthew 19:16-24 and Matthew 20:29-34.

- What is the rich man in Matthew 19 seeking from Jesus?
- Did he get what he came for? Why or why not?
- What were the blind men in Matthew 20 seeking from Jesus?
- Did they get what they came for? Why or why not?

Imagine Jesus asked you right now: What do you want from me? How would you answer? Let's tell him what we want from him together in prayer.

Prayer for Men's Study (15 minutes).

This week in *Fighting Shadows* the men are reading about the shadow of futility – the struggle to find meaning in work and a sense of purpose in life.

Let's pray that men at The Creek will:

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- Recognize their need for rest and play rather than falling prey to workaholism.
- Root their identity and purpose in Christ so that in moments of crisis they respond with



wisdom and virtue.

Closing.

Someone will read Romans 11:33-36 over your group as a closing prayer.

Your Kingdom Come March 30 | 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.

Here are a few things that often feel futile:

- Arguing on the internet.
- Neatly folding fitted sheets.
- Stopping spam emails.

Futility, like perfectionism, can paralyze us, keeping us from pursuing more because we think, "*What's the point?*" And, often, this happens in our work life. In fact, we can become so consumed by our work that we forget providing financially for our family is only one part of life. Some people are able to fulfill their calling in a way that provides for them financially, while many others live out their calling outside of their 9-to-5 jobs. Work is important—it allows us to eat, have shelter, and provide for our needs—but our calling is about how God intends to use us to grow His Kingdom and lead our families toward him.

In Matthew 18:1-5, Jesus teaches that to inherit the Kingdom of God, we must have the heart of a child. He expresses this by saying, "*Become like little children.*" What does childlike faith look like?

• Humility • Trust • Love

As we grow older, life experiences can harden our hearts, causing us to lose these characteristics. Jesus calls us to regain a childlike heart—to love without reservation, to trust, and to humbly serve others.



I wonder... do we begin our marriages with many childlike qualities, only to have life harden our hearts toward our spouse? Could we overcome futility in our home, marriage, family, and calling by embracing childlike faith in our relationship with Jesus—and with each other?

Reflection & discussion:

1. Have you ever seen a child wrestle with the futility of life? Probably not. How might becoming more like a child help you battle against futility?
2. In what ways have you allowed your heart to be hardened toward God? Toward your spouse?
3. What does it look like to love each other with humility, trust, and love? How can your marriage embrace a childlike love toward God and one another?

Unfortunately, in many marriages, childlike love is not present. Often, it's quite the opposite. Many marriages struggle with abuse (emotional, mental, even physical). These things have no place in our homes. Childlike, Christ-centered love does not tolerate it. Seek help and safety immediately if this is present in your marriage.

4. Pray together every day this week.