



Your Kingdom Come March 23 | Group Guide (Men)

Opening with these 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.

Read this intro and go over the "guiding principles."

One of the great distractions of our age is for men to become successful at that which does not matter for eternity. As the authors point out, "God has more for you than shallow ambition and a worldly version of success." The question is, "How do I orient my life so that my greatest ambitions are aligned with God's call on my life and God's grand vision for the Kingdom?"

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 Nehemiah 1:2-10.

²I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. ³They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." ⁴When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. ⁵Then I said:

"Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. ⁷We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

⁸*"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'*

¹⁰*"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. ¹¹Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."*

I was cupbearer to the king.

Key idea: What we want and how hard we chase it are at the core of our spiritual lives. Rather than suppressing ambition, men need to see it as a God-given desire to make a



difference. True ambition reconciles personal aspirations with God's vision for His Kingdom, transforming selfish wants into acts of service and renewal.

Pray together for your conversation.

Much is at stake when we consider our ambitions. What are we giving our lives to? How do we invest our best energy to the things that will matter for eternity? Pray together, asking God for clarity and conviction as we lean into joining with him to advance the Kingdom!

Check in with one another and reflect on the following questions from Chapter 6:

1. What is one idea or quote that stood out to you from this week's reading and why?
2. In what areas of your life do you struggle most with feelings of futility and insignificance? How has this affected your motivation and sense of purpose?
3. On page 114, Sam Gibson is quoted as saying, "The questions we ask determine the culture we create." Sadly, our questions are far too often aligned around our own personal peace and affluence (page 116). So how do we shape our questions to something beyond our well-being and wealth? What sort of culture does God envision for us and what questions do we need to be asking to help shape this culture?
4. How does the idea that "you have a calling to serve and heal the world" challenge your current perspective on your work and daily activities?
5. Where are you individually or where might we as a group be sensing a movement of God toward Kingdom ambition?

Finish by praying for one another.



Go around the circle, allowing each man to offer to God his own prayers of confession, hope and readiness to respond to God's invitation to join Him in His mission in the world.

Pray this blessing over the group from pages 131-132 of your *Fighting Shadows* book.

May God help us ask better questions.

May God lift our vision beyond the horizon of our own concerns.

May God help us feed our frustrations.

May God call us to covenantal prayer.

May God give us courage to make impossible asks.

May God accelerate his purposes through our lives.

May we see decades unfold in mere days, for the God of heaven is on our side.

May we push back the shadow of worldly ambition and leave a legacy of brilliant light!

Your Kingdom Come

March 23 | 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.*

You will 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 Matthew 16–17. Jesus reveals his glory to Peter, James, and John in the transfiguration (17:1-13) and faces the failure of his disciples' faith to heal a demon possessed boy (17:14-21). Jesus calls Peter a rock of faith (16:18) and a satanic stumbling block (16:23). Jesus endures the demands of the Pharisees (16:1). He predicts his death (16:21; 17:22-23) and even has to pay his taxes (17:24). Recording these events, Matthew succinctly captures the highs and lows and in-betweens of life.

In his message, Emerson divided these chapters into three sections: going toward the mountain, being on the mountain, and coming down from the mountain.

- Have you had a "mountaintop" experience with God? What was it like?
- As you reflect on your life right now, are you walking toward the mountain, are you on top of the mountain, or are you coming down from the mountain? In other words, are you struggling through life and hoping to see God's glory, are you experiencing God's glory, or are you coming back to the "real world" after seeing God's glory? What best describes you now and why?

Let's look at some of the key moments in these chapters together. Put yourself in the disciples' sandals, as Jesus reveals new pieces of his identity, new parts of his plan, and new glimpses of his glory.



Invite someone to pray for your encounter with God's Word. Have different people read each of the following, pausing between each passage to ask the questions below: Matthew 16:13-20, 16:21-28, and 17:1-13.

- What did you notice?
- What did God stir in your spirit as you read?
- How do you think God is calling you to respond?

When your group has read and discussed all three passages, explain that you are going to guide everyone through a time of prayer. You will read the bolded prompts below; invite them to pray aloud in response to the prompts as they feel led.

Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself to us.

Peter declared that you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. We also want to take time now to declare who you are and what You mean to us. *(Pause for prayers. Don't be afraid of some silence.)*

Jesus, you corrected Peter because he did not "have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Lord, we confess now the "human concerns" that distract us from following you. *(Pause for prayers. Don't be afraid of some silence.)*

Jesus, you say that whoever wants to be your disciple must "deny themselves and take up their cross and follow" you. We come to you now asking you to show us how to do that, recognizing that suffering proceeds glory. *(Pause for prayers. Don't be afraid of some silence.)*

Jesus, you revealed your glory to Peter, James, and John on the mountain. We come before you now to ask you to show us your glory. *(Pause for prayers. Don't be afraid of some silence.)*

Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself to us and for hearing our prayers. May we faithfully follow you in the valley, on the road, and on the mountaintop. Amen.

Prayer for Men's Study

This week in *Fighting Shadows*, then men are reading the chapter on the shadow of ambition. Bethke and Tyson write that "holy ambition starts with kingdom vision" (120).



Rather than channeling ambition down self-serving avenues of power, influence, and love of distinction – or burying ambition in laziness, distraction, and fear – men should notice and take ownership of problems and seek kingdom solutions.

Let's pray for each of the following.

- May God lift men's vision beyond the horizon of their own concerns.
- May God give men courage to reject passivity and use their strength and energy for God's kingdom.
- May God give men a clear sense of His purpose for each of them.
- May men make a difference in the world, not to be praised themselves but to bring glory to God.

Closing (5 minutes).

As we reflect on God's glory, revealed through Jesus at his transfiguration, let's listen to these words from Psalm 34.

Read or have someone read Psalm 34:1-5 as a closing prayer over your group.

Your Kingdom Come

March 23 | 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.



This week we are looking at Matthew 16–17. Jesus reveals his glory to Peter, James, and John in the transfiguration (17:1-13) and faces the failure of his disciples' faith to heal a demon possessed boy (17:14-21). Jesus calls Peter a rock of faith (16:18) and a satanic stumbling block (16:23). Jesus endures the demands of the Pharisees (16:1). He predicts his death (16:21; 17:22-23) and even has to pay his taxes (17:24). Recording these events, Matthew succinctly captures the highs and lows and in-betweens of life.

In his message, Emerson divided these chapters into three sections: going toward the mountain, being on the mountain, and coming down from the mountain.

- Have you had a “mountaintop” experience with God? What was it like?
- As you reflect on your life right now, are you walking toward the mountain, are you on top of the mountain, or are you coming down from the mountain? In other words, are you struggling through life and hoping to see God's glory, are you experiencing God's glory, or are you coming back to the “real world” after seeing God's glory? What best describes you now and why?

Let's look at some of the key moments in these chapters together. Put yourself in the disciples' sandals, as Jesus reveals new pieces of his identity, new parts of his plan, and new glimpses of his glory.

Read Matthew 16:13-20, 16:21-28, and 17:1-13.

- What did you notice?
- What did God stir in your spirit as you read?
- How do you think God is calling you to respond?

Your leader will guide you through a time of prayer. After each spoken prayer prompt, please pray out loud as you feel led.

Prayer for Men's Study

This week in *Fighting Shadows*, then men are reading the chapter on the shadow of ambition. Bethke and Tyson write that “holy ambition starts with kingdom vision” (120).



Rather than channeling ambition down self-serving avenues of power, influence, and love of distinction – or burying ambition in laziness, distraction, and fear – men should notice and take ownership of problems and seek kingdom solutions.

Let's pray for each of the following.

- May God lift men's vision beyond the horizon of their own concerns.
- May God give men courage to reject passivity and use their strength and energy for God's kingdom.
- May God give men a clear sense of his purpose for each of them.
- May men make a difference in the world, not to be praised themselves but to bring glory to God.

Closing

Someone will read Psalm 34:1-5 as a closing prayer over your group.

Your Kingdom Come

March 23 | 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.

Ambition is a powerful force. Listen to these words from some of the most ambitious people in history:

- *"The only way to do great work is to love what you do."* — Steve Jobs
- *"Believe you can and you're halfway there."* — Theodore Roosevelt
- *"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."* — Eleanor Roosevelt



Their drive, focus, and ambition led them to incredible success—wealth, power, and fame. And yet, Jesus offers a sobering perspective on what truly matters: *"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"* - Matthew 16:26

As married couples, we have ambitions, too. Ambition itself isn't a bad thing—but what drives us? Are our ambitions centered on personal success, or are they aligned with God's call on our lives? Are you and our spouse working together to use your gifts, talents, and resources to build God's Kingdom?

God desires our hearts. He's far less concerned with the size of our house, the kind of car we drive, or whether our kids make the travel baseball team. His greatest desire is for us to know him, love him, and reflect his love to the world.

1. What is one small step your family can take this week to show Jesus' love to a neighbor?
2. Pray together six times this week, asking Jesus how he wants to use your family to connect people to him.