

BOOK OF *Matthew*

WINTER/SPRING 2026

Life Group Curriculum
Based on the Sermon Series



LIFE GROUPS

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WEEK 1

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF *The King*

THE BAPTISM OF THE KING

Matthew 3:13–17

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Before Jesus ever preached a sermon or called a disciple, He walked into the waters of the Jordan to be baptized by John. But why would the sinless Son of God need baptism? John asked the same question. And yet Jesus insisted—not because He needed cleansing, but because this moment fulfilled all righteousness. His baptism marked the beginning of His priestly ministry, identifying Him as the true High Priest and the spotless Lamb. As He rose from the water, the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and the Father spoke—a holy anointing for a holy mission.

In our own lives, baptism doesn't just symbolize a fresh start. It proclaims publicly that through repentance and belief, we belong to Jesus. We've laid down our old life and risen into a new identity. It's more than personal. It's priestly. Just as Jesus was set apart, so are we. 1 Peter 2 calls us a royal priesthood, set apart to receive His mercy and declare His praises to the world. Baptism isn't the finish line of salvation. It's the starting line of a new purpose: to live on mission as redeemed image-bearers, marked by water and sent by grace.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God's Word as best as you can without teaching. You don't have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: Why did Jesus insist on being baptized by John, and how does that “fulfill all righteousness” as stated in the text?



HEART: How does knowing Jesus’ baptism was a priestly anointing—and not for repentance—shape your view of your own baptism?



HANDS: What’s one way you can live out your “royal priesthood” this week, representing Jesus to others through service, prayer, or truth?

KEY TRUTH

Baptism marks us as His—set apart by mercy and sent by grace.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 2

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF *The King*

THE TEMPTATION OF THE KING

Matthew 4:1-11

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Right after Jesus was baptized and declared the beloved Son of God, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness—not into comfort, but into confrontation. For forty days, He fasted. For forty days, He was vulnerable. And it's there, in His hunger and isolation, that Satan showed up. The enemy's voice twisted Scripture and tried to exploit weakness. But Jesus didn't argue, reason, or negotiate. He stood firm by quoting truth. Every temptation He faced was met with "it is written." The Word was His defense. The Word was His sword.

Temptation itself isn't sin—it's acting on it that leads to sin. Similarly, facing temptation is not a sign that God has abandoned us. Often, it's the exact place He strengthens us. Like Jesus, we won't avoid spiritual battles. But we can win them. Satan still uses the same tactics: doubt, distortion, and deception. But we're not helpless. Jesus didn't just model resistance—He made it possible. Because of Him, when we stand on Scripture, we stand in victory.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

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WEEK 2

QUESTIONS



HEAD: What patterns do you notice in the way Satan tempts Jesus—and how Jesus responds?



HEART: Where are you currently vulnerable to temptation, and how might God be inviting you to stand on His Word in that area?



HANDS: What's one verse of Scripture you can memorize and meditate on this week to help you resist temptation?

KEY TRUTH

Temptation is a battleground, but God's Word is our weapon and our victory.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 3

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF *The King*

THE BEGINNING OF THE KING'S MINISTRY

Matthew 4:12-25

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, He didn't retreat—He advanced. He came preaching, proclaiming, healing, and calling people to repentance. His presence was the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven. Wherever Jesus walked, the Kingdom broke in. The blind saw. The hopeless found hope. The King had come, and He came to restore what was broken.

But Jesus didn't do it alone. Right there on the shoreline, He called ordinary fishermen to an extraordinary purpose: "Follow Me." And they dropped everything. His call wasn't to comfort or convenience, but to a mission—one that would reshape their lives around His Kingdom. The same invitation extends to us today. Jesus is still building His Kingdom, still calling disciples, and still shining light into dark places. Following Him means stepping into a new way of life, where His mission becomes our own.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

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QUESTIONS



HEAD: What do these verses show us about the nature of Jesus' Kingdom and the kind of people He calls to follow Him?



HEART: What does Jesus' call—"Follow Me"—stir in you personally? What might you be holding onto that He's asking you to leave behind?



HANDS: What is one intentional way you can help demonstrate the Kingdom of God to someone this week—through your words, actions, or time?

KEY TRUTH

Jesus calls ordinary people into His mission of hope and restoration.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 4

THE MESSAGE OF *The King*



THE BLESSED LIFE PART 1

Matthew 5:1-12

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

As Jesus preached from the mountainside, His words were unlike anything the crowd expected. He didn't celebrate the powerful, the successful, or the self-sufficient. He blessed the poor. The meek. The persecuted. This is the King's charter for His Kingdom. Jesus wasn't just giving inspirational sayings; He was describing what Kingdom citizens look like—people whose hearts have been changed by His grace.

When we truly see Jesus as King, it reshapes how we view ourselves and the world around us. The Beatitudes, as they are often called, aren't boxes to check but blessings we grow into as we follow Him. They call us to humility in a world of pride, mercy in a world of revenge, and joy even in suffering. The Kingdom of God is not just a future hope—it's a present reality that changes our perspective and redefines what it means to be truly blessed.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

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QUESTIONS



HEAD: What stands out to you most about the list of blessings Jesus gives in this passage? How do they contrast with the world's values?



HEART: Which Beatitude feels especially challenging or convicting for you right now? Why?



HANDS: What's one way you can choose a Kingdom attitude over a worldly one this week—at work, at home, or in a relationship?

KEY TRUTH

Recognizing Jesus as King changes how we live and helps us grow into His blessing.

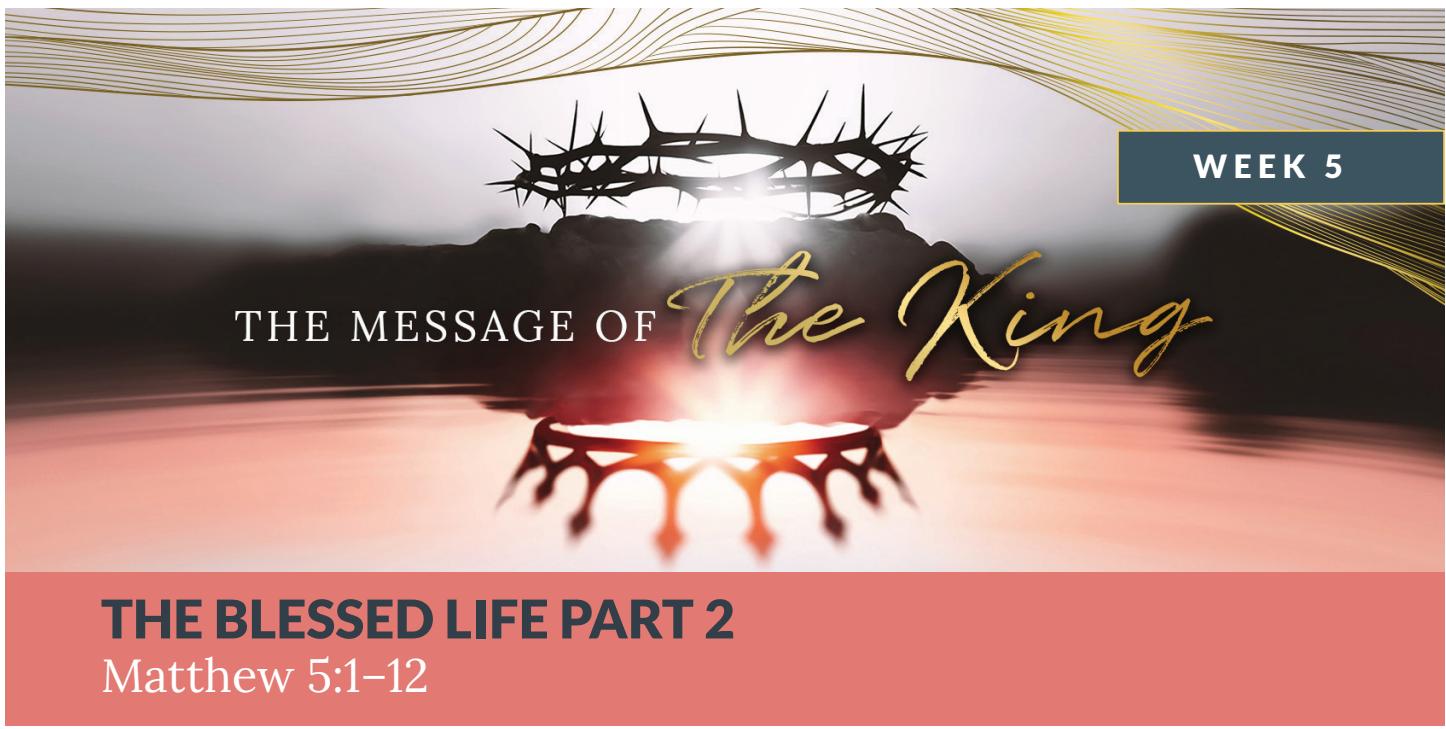
CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 5

THE MESSAGE OF *The King*

THE BLESSED LIFE PART 2

Matthew 5:1-12

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Persecution is not a possibility, it's a promise. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness." That's not usually how we define blessing. But Jesus says that when the world pushes back against those who live for Him, Heaven leans in. The world may reject, insult, or even attack, but the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who endure.

Persecution has many faces—and it often comes not because we've done wrong, but because we're living so fully in the light that the darkness can't help but take notice. Jesus says to expect it—and to rejoice in it. Why? Because it proves we're living for something greater than comfort. He invites us to prepare, not with fear, but with faith. And we aren't left alone; we stand with the prophets, with believers around the world, and most of all, with Christ Himself.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

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QUESTIONS



HEAD: Why does Jesus say we are “blessed” when we are persecuted for righteousness? What does that teach us about the nature of His Kingdom?



HEART: Have you ever felt the tension of living for Christ in a setting where it wasn’t welcome? How did that impact you?



HANDS: What’s one practical way you can prepare your heart now to stand firm for Jesus when challenges or opposition come?

KEY TRUTH

Persecution reveals true Kingdom faith in those who walk boldly in the light.

CLOSING PRAYER

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SALT AND LIGHT

Matthew 5:13-16

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Jesus uses two simple but powerful images to describe His followers: salt and light. Salt preserves what is good and adds flavor where things are bland. Light drives out darkness and gives direction. When Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth...the light of the world,” He’s giving us our identity. As citizens of His Kingdom, we are designed to bring out the God-given flavors and colors of the world.

Our presence should preserve truth, add life, and point people toward something greater than themselves. The world is dark and spiritually starving, and God intends for our lives—our love, our joy, our integrity, our words—to awaken hunger and illuminate hope. Not for our own glory, but so others may “see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven.”

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

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QUESTIONS



HEAD: What does Jesus mean when He calls His followers salt and light? What specific qualities do these metaphors highlight?



HEART: When people observe your life, what do you hope they notice—and what do you think they're actually seeing?



HANDS: What would it take for you to become more intentional in “shining” or “seasoning” your environment this week so that someone sees God’s character through you?

KEY TRUTH

Living for the Kingdom stirs hunger for Christ and leads others to Him.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 7

THE MESSAGE OF *The King*



GREATER RIGHTEOUSNESS: ANGER, LUST, DIVORCE Matthew 5:17-32

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

When Jesus taught about the law, He didn't dismiss it. He deepened it. He said, "You've heard it said... but I say to you," not to erase God's commands, but to reveal their true intent. Sin doesn't start with murder. It begins with anger. It doesn't begin with adultery. It begins with lust. Jesus goes beneath the surface to expose the root of sin, and in doing so, He reveals that the Kingdom isn't about managing sin. It's about being transformed by love.

Jesus doesn't lower the standard—He raises it. As the perfect embodiment of God's law, He not only obeys the law but empowers us to live it out through His Spirit. Kingdom people don't just avoid evil—they pursue love, purity, reconciliation, and self-control. Our obedience flows not from fear, but from a new heart that desires what God desires. When the law is written on our hearts, we stop asking, "How far can I go?" and start asking, "How close can I stay to Christ?"

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

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QUESTIONS



HEAD: What is Jesus teaching about the relationship between outward actions and inward desires in this passage?



HEART: Are there areas in your life where you've been trying to "manage" sin instead of allowing God to transform your heart?



HANDS: What's one way you can pursue deeper heart-level obedience this week—in your thoughts, your relationships, or your reactions?

KEY TRUTH

Kingdom obedience flows from a heart shaped by love, not fear.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 8

THE MESSAGE OF *The King*

GREATER RIGHTEOUSNESS: OATHS, RETALIATION, LOVE Matthew 5:33-48

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

The Pharisees were experts at looking righteous—but Jesus wasn't impressed by polished appearances. His teachings explored the condition of the heart. Do we bend the truth to protect ourselves? Do we strike back when we're wronged? Do we reserve love only for those who are easy to love? If so, we may be more focused on managing our image than allowing God to transform our hearts.

Jesus points us to something greater than surface-level obedience. He calls us to be people of integrity, mercy, and radical love—even for our enemies. That kind of righteousness isn't something we can fake or force. It's the fruit of a healed heart, made new by His Spirit. When we stop asking, "What do others see in me?" and start asking, "What does Jesus see in me?" we begin to change from the inside out.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

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QUESTIONS



HEAD: What contrasts does Jesus make between the common teachings and His way of living in this passage?



HEART: Where in your life do you struggle to love others the way Jesus describes here?



HANDS: What is one intentional step you can take this week to speak truth with grace or to show love to someone who is hard to love?

KEY TRUTH

True righteousness is the fruit of a Spirit-healed heart.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 9

THE MESSAGE OF *The King*

GIVING WITH GRACE

Matthew 6:1-4; 6:19-24

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Jesus never avoided the subject of money. He drew a clear line between earthly treasure and Heavenly treasure, warning that if we live to be noticed, praised, or financially secure at all costs, we may gain short-term rewards but miss the deeper riches of the Kingdom. Where we invest our time, energy, and resources reveals who we truly trust—and what we truly value.

Kingdom people live with open hands. They give quietly, not for recognition, but out of devotion. They store up treasure in Heaven by investing in what lasts: people and the gospel that changes lives forever. The call is simple: Will we cling to what fades, or trust the One who offers eternal reward?

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God's Word as best as you can without teaching. You don't have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: What does Jesus teach about the connection between our heart and our treasure?



HEART: How do you honestly feel about your relationship with money, recognition, or possessions? What might it reveal about where your trust lies?



HANDS: What is one way you can practice quiet generosity this week?

KEY TRUTH

Kingdom people live with open hands, investing in what lasts—people and the gospel.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 10

THE MESSAGE OF *The King*

SEEK FIRST, STRESS LESS

Matthew 6:25-34

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Worry promises control but delivers nothing but fear, distraction, and spiritual exhaustion. Jesus cuts through the noise of anxiety with a freeing truth: your Father knows what you need. He points to the birds and the wildflowers—fragile, fleeting, and yet deeply cared for—and reminds us that we are worth infinitely more. Worry doesn't grow us. It doesn't protect us. It drains us. And it blinds us to the loving provision of God.

Jesus doesn't just tell us not to worry—He tells us what to do instead: Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. This isn't passive hopefulness; it's purposeful trust. It means shifting our focus from what we can't control to the One who holds all things together. When we put His will and His way first, we can trust Him to take care of the rest.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

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QUESTIONS



HEAD: How does Jesus use creation—like birds and flowers—to teach us about God's care?



HEART: When anxiety rises, where do you turn first? What does that reveal about what your heart truly values?



HANDS: What's one specific worry you can give to God this week to make room for trust and peace?

KEY TRUTH

Peace comes when we trust that our Heavenly Father knows and provides.

CLOSING PRAYER

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DON'T JUDGE ME

Matthew 7:1-6

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” Jesus isn’t calling us to ignore sin or abandon truth; He’s calling us to start with our own hearts. Hypocrisy blinds us to our own flaws while magnifying the faults of others. When we skip self-evaluation, our help becomes harmful, and our correction turns into condemnation.

Jesus invites us to examine our hearts before we ever speak into someone else’s life. Only those who know they’re loved can confess their failures without fear. And only those who’ve received mercy can extend it. When we walk in that posture, we don’t criticize to feel superior—we empathize because we remember what it’s like to need grace.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God’s Word as best as you can without teaching. You don’t have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: What is Jesus warning against in this passage, and how does He suggest we deal with our own sin?



HEART: When are you most tempted to judge or criticize others? What's usually going on in your heart in those moments?



HANDS: What's one way you can practice humility and empathy this week—instead of reacting in judgment?

KEY TRUTH

True discernment starts with humility, not hypocrisy.

CLOSING PRAYER

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TWO WAYS AND TWO TREES

Matthew 7:13-23

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Jesus offered a clear and challenging warning: not every road leads to life. The broad road is easy, popular, and comfortable, but it ends in destruction. The narrow road is harder, less traveled, and requires surrender, but it leads to life. In a world of endless voices and options, Jesus is painfully clear: only one way leads to the Kingdom, and it's the way of obedience.

Discernment isn't optional for Kingdom people. It's essential. False teachers may sound convincing. False disciples may look the part. But Jesus says the true test is fruit—what grows from our lives when no one is watching. He's not moved by empty words or spiritual performance. He calls us to walk the narrow road with Him—daily, fully, and faithfully.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God's Word as best as you can without teaching. You don't have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: What contrasts does Jesus make between the wide and narrow gates, and what do they teach us about the path to life?



HEART: Are there any voices you've been listening to—online, in culture, or even in Christian circles—that sound good but may not align with the way of Jesus? How can you grow in discernment to recognize what is true?



HANDS: Who in your life helps you stay on the narrow road, and how can you intentionally invite their input or encouragement this week?

KEY TRUTH

Life is found on the narrow road of daily obedience to Jesus.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 13

THE MESSAGE OF *The King*

BUILDING YOUR HOUSE ON THE ROCK

Matthew 7:24-29

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Jesus paints a picture of two builders: both hear His words, and both face the same storm—but only one house stands. The difference isn't in what they knew, but in what they did. The wise builder puts Jesus' words into practice. The foolish one does not. A secure life doesn't happen by accident. It's built, one obedient step at a time, on the Rock that cannot be shaken.

Storms always come. Challenges, grief, and disappointment test the strength of our foundation. A life built on shifting sand—like opinions, emotions, or success—will eventually collapse. But a life built on Christ will endure. His words hold weight and His love holds fast.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God's Word as best as you can without teaching. You don't have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: Why does Jesus emphasize doing His words, not just hearing them? What does that tell us about true discipleship?



HEART: When have you experienced a “storm” in your life that revealed what your foundation was built on?



HANDS: What daily or weekly rhythm could you begin (or return to) that would help you build your life more intentionally on God’s Word?

KEY TRUTH

A life built on Christ stands firm—secure, steady, unshakable by life’s storms.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 14

THE MESSAGE OF *The King*

EASTER SUNDAY

Luke 24:36-49

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

When Jesus appeared to His disciples after rising from the grave, He didn't scold them for their doubts or dismiss their fear. He offered peace. He showed them His scars. He invited them to touch, to look, to see for themselves that death had truly been defeated. He gave them abundant evidence—through His body, His words, and the fulfillment of Scripture.

But His goal wasn't just understanding. It was transformation. Jesus opened their minds to grasp the truth, and then He gave them a mission: to go and proclaim forgiveness in His name to all nations. The resurrection isn't just history—it's a living hope that provides grace for our past and purpose for our waiting.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God's Word as best as you can without teaching. You don't have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: The disciples had their minds opened to understand Scripture. When has Jesus helped you see something clearly that you didn't understand before?



HEART: When you hear that the resurrection is both real and personal, how does your heart respond—joy, hesitation, wonder, resistance? Why do you think that is?



HANDS: What part of your life feels most in need of resurrection—something that needs new life, renewed purpose, or fresh hope? What's one practical step you can take this week to invite Jesus into that area?

KEY TRUTH

The resurrection gives us grace for our past and purpose for our future.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 15

PRAYING LIKE JESUS PART 1

Matthew 6:5-15

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

In a world that often values appearances, Jesus warns His followers not to treat prayer like a stage. Whether it's public displays meant to impress or mindless repetition meant to earn favor, these approaches miss the heart of what prayer is meant to be. Jesus invites us into something far more personal: the honest, intimate conversation of a child with their Holy Father.

When we pray, we are not addressing a distant deity—we're speaking to a holy God who has welcomed us into His family. The Lord's Prayer reveals that posture. It begins not with requests, but with reverence: "Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name." In just a few lines, Jesus shows us how to center our hearts in worship, surrender, daily dependence, repentance, and trust. True prayer isn't perfect. It's personal. A secure child doesn't need to impress their Father—they simply speak and know they're heard. That's the kind of prayer Jesus longs to shape in us.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God's Word as best as you can without teaching. You don't have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: Why does Jesus caution against “babbling like the Gentiles”? What is He teaching us about God’s attentiveness and our need for sincerity?



HEART: When do you find yourself drifting into “performance” or “routine” in your prayer life? What patterns tend to lead you there, and how can you recognize and redirect your heart when it happens?



HANDS: What helps you stay honest, grounded, and present with God when you pray? What’s one practice you could lean into this week?

KEY TRUTH

Prayer is a personal, honest conversation between a child and their holy, loving Father.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 16

PRAYING LIKE JESUS PART 2

Matthew 6:5-15

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He didn't just give them words to recite. He gave them a pattern to follow. The Lord's Prayer is a framework for communion with the Father. In it, we see four foundational movements: Praise, Respond, Ask, and Yield. Each line draws us into deeper worship, honest surrender, and faithful dependence.

This kind of prayer isn't driven by ritual or routine. It's Scripture-fed, Spirit-led, and worship-based. We begin with praise—"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name"—anchoring ourselves in who God is. We respond with surrender—"Your kingdom come, Your will be done." We ask for daily needs and grace—"Give us... forgive us... lead us..." And we yield—aligning our hearts with His as we follow His leading.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God's Word as best as you can without teaching. You don't have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: Why do you think Jesus gave a pattern instead of a script for prayer? What's the danger of turning His model into a routine?



HEART: How do the different sections of the Lord's Prayer reflect the priorities of God's Kingdom and our relationship with Him?



HANDS: Which part of the prayer—Praise, Respond, Ask, or Yield—comes most naturally to you, and which part do you tend to skip or avoid? What's one intentional step you can take this week to grow in the area that feels less familiar?

KEY TRUTH

Jesus gave us a pattern for prayer that draws us into deeper communion with Him.

CLOSING PRAYER

P

R

A

Y



PRAYING AND FASTING

Matthew 6:16-18

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Fasting, like prayer, is meant to be intimate, not impressive. Jesus warns His followers not to turn it into a spiritual performance, but to approach it as a private act of devotion. It's not about looking holy—it's about hungering for more of God.

Fasting isn't always convenient or comfortable, but it's powerful. It teaches us dependence, sharpens our focus, and creates space for God to speak, refine, and move. True fasting shapes Christ-like character in us, advances the work of God's Kingdom through us, and draws us closer to the Father.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God's Word as best as you can without teaching. You don't have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: Why do you think Jesus says “when you fast” instead of “if you fast”? What does that suggest about its place in the life of a disciple?



HEART: How do you typically respond to discomfort or sacrifice in your spiritual life? What does that response reveal about your desires?



HANDS: Is there something you could fast from this week—whether food, media, or another distraction—to draw closer to God? How might you offer that quietly, as an act of devotion shared only between you and the Father?

KEY TRUTH

Fasting is a quiet surrender that deepens devotion and draws us closer to God.

CLOSING PRAYER

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WEEK 18

PRAYING UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENS

Matthew 7:7-12

Sermon Notes

Welcome _____

Opening Prayer _____

Purpose (Why are we here?) _____

Ground Rules _____

Icebreaker _____

BRIDGING THE GAP

Jesus invites us to come to God with confident persistence: ask, seek, knock. These aren't one-time actions—they're ongoing postures of trust. He doesn't paint a picture of a reluctant God who needs to be persuaded, but of a good Father who knows how to give good gifts to His children.

When we truly trust the Father-heart of God, our prayers change. We stop holding back. We pray with purpose, with boldness, and with consistency. We seek His will, not just His answers. We knock on the door, asking for His presence, not just the outcomes we want. And when we don't understand His timing or His ways, we still trust Him. Because in His wisdom, He gives us not what we most want, but what we most need.

TELL THE STORY



Tell the story



Read the story

Take it back a page and tell this story from God's Word as best as you can without teaching. You don't have to memorize it word for word. Try not to express opinions or make your own points. Just tell the story. Then read it aloud together in your group.

QUESTIONS



HEAD: How does Jesus use the example of earthly parents to help us understand the goodness and generosity of our heavenly Father?



HEART: When it comes to your prayer life, do you tend to give up quickly or keep pressing in? What might that say about your trust in God as a Father?



HANDS: What's one specific thing you need to bring to God this week with persistence—asking, seeking, and knocking in faith?

KEY TRUTH

Trusting God's goodness frees us to pray with boldness and persistence.

CLOSING PRAYER

P

R

A

Y

COMPONENTS:

WELCOME

Honoring others by welcoming & valuing them

OPENING PRAYER

Inviting the Holy Spirit into our presence

PURPOSE

Remembering why we are here

GROUND RULES

Establishing healthy boundaries for Life Groups

ICEBREAKER

Setting the stage for trust, transparency and relationships

BRIDGE

Discussing God's Word together

STORY

Retelling the story in God's Word without adding opinions or teaching

QUESTIONS

Applying what we have learned to our lives

CLOSING PRAYER

A time to worship God, focus on His mission, confess, and present any requests to Him

GROUND RULES:

WHY GROUND RULES?

Many of us find ourselves cringing when the subject of rules comes up. Rules can often indicate limits or restrictions that impede our desired actions. The ground rules we will abide by are specifically designed to give freedom rather than restrictions. It is our desire that through effective ground rules each person will feel the freedom to share from their hearts, feel the assurance of confidence, and experience a group willing to listen. When interacting as a group, we can find ourselves checking out or shutting down for the smallest of reasons. Being aware of our impact on each other is paramount for a safe environment.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS KEY

We will all do our part to create an environment where everyone can be real, open, and honest with our struggles and victories. What is said in the group stays in the group.

NO CROSS TALK

Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations, texting, or phone calls. Cross talk devalues the person sharing and communicates that they are not as important as what you may be doing (Be sensitive to those with cell phones—kids, family issues, on-call at work, etc.). Remember, when going over the Ground Rules in your group, give those who may be on-call or have children the opportunity to communicate that they may need to take a call or text during group.

DON'T RESCUE

When people are sharing something deeply personal and painful, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation. Often this will cause people to stop sharing and result in not going as deep as they intended. Resist the temptation to rescue people. We must be sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is doing in their life.

NO FIXING OTHERS

Try to hear what people are sharing without trying to fix them. If people think that as soon as they share a problem or issue everyone is going to immediately start offering advice or solutions, often they simply won't share at all. If you think you have specific knowledge or experience that can help someone, feel free to approach them afterwards to see if they are open to hearing what you have to say.

USE "I" STATEMENTS

It's easy to talk about the issues of others; in Life Groups we will use "I" statements. We will try to avoid words such as "them," "the church," "us," "we," "he/she," etc. Using "I" statements helps us to focus on what God is doing in our lives and gives us opportunity for self-reflection. This allows maximum potential for effectual change in our lives.

LISTEN & PAUSE

Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Don't think about what you're going to say next or how you're going to respond; really listen. After someone shares, give a pause to allow the group to feel the weight of what is being shared and fully consider it before the next person shares. This pause also gives the person time to reflect a little deeper while continuing to share more. Remember, SILENCE IS OK. It gives time for reflection and others to begin sharing.

STAY ON TOPIC

Much time and prayer is put into the determination of the biblical direction our church is headed. We must value the importance of that direction in taking it to a heart level in our Life Groups. In addition, Life Group leaders prepare according to this direction and the topic for each week. Rabbit trails may devalue the unity as well as what the Lord is doing in our church body. In honoring each individual's time & schedules, please try to stay on topic with every group question. Rabbit trails can also add time to the end of the Life Group and does not honor others in our group who may need to get to their families and/or may need rest for the next day's busy schedule.

ALLOW OTHERS TO TALK

We all have a story or response to share, making it important that we value each other during Life Group. Sometimes we may find ourselves overtalking out of nervousness or even habit. However, to honor each person and their time, we must do our part by keeping our own talk time limited and to the point, giving each person an opportunity to interact.

AVOID DIVISIVE SPEECH

Paul spends A LOT of time encouraging the New Testament churches to strive for unity at all costs. They were composed of people from all over the ethnic, social, economic, and political spectrums. The world told them they didn't belong together and even set enmity between them. Jesus came to tear that all down. Let's not build back the barriers Jesus gave His life to remove. It is unlikely that everyone in the Life Groups thinks exactly like you do on every topic. They're wrong on some of it; you're wrong on some of it. Let our words be seasoned with grace when we talk about non-primary issues.

PRAYER PATTERN:

Praise

Response

Ask

Yield

Many believers lack confidence in their prayer life, primarily because they have simply never been taught how to pray. Most of us learn by listening to others around us rather than going to Scripture to learn at the feet of Jesus. Fortunately, He laid out a very specific way for us to pray in the Gospels. We call it the Lord's Prayer. While many recite it word for word, it can also be used as an outline for us to use in our specific circumstances and place in life. We use the acronym P-R-A-Y, with each letter of the word "pray" serving as a different movement of the prayer.

- **Praise:** This involves beginning prayer by acknowledging and praising God for who He is, His greatness, and all He has done. It helps to shift focus from personal issues to God's character and majesty. This step is key, and the rest of our prayer is built upon it.
- **Respond:** It's only after seeing who He is that we can see clearly who we are. After acknowledging what is true about Him, and giving Him praise for it, we acknowledge what is true about ourselves, and respond to Him. This step involves confessing sins, acknowledging wrong dispositions of the heart, and asking for forgiveness. It is about turning away from sin and self and seeking God's help to live rightly.
- **Ask:** Acknowledging what is true about God and what is true about ourselves changes our requests. It shifts the focus from our comfort to His Glory. Here, we bring our specific needs and desires to God, for ourselves (petition) and for others (intercession), with His Glory in mind.
- **Yield:** The final step involves surrendering our control and submitting to God's will and plan for our lives, trusting that His ways are best. It is about making time to listen to God and align our desires with His.

DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY:



OUR VALUES:

**We Dig Deep**

... because Living Water is worth the work

**We Make Room**

... because the Gospel creates space for everyone at the table

**We Kneel Down**

... because you can't wash feet while standing up

**We Team Up**

... because Jesus calls us out of isolation into participation

**We Have Fun**

... because Joy is the culture of Heaven

DISCIPLESHIP DNA:

HUNGRY LEARNER

I depend on the Holy Spirit daily by listening and praying through Scripture in community.

- What spiritual Disciplines are you currently engaging in – personally or with others – and what impact is that having on your walking with Jesus in all of life?
- What habits are currently stoking or starving your delight in Jesus?

COMPASSIONATE WITNESS

I see and sacrificially engage those around me for the sake of the Gospel.

- When was the last time you got uncomfortable for the sake of the Gospel?
- How have your actions reflected the Gospel to others?

FAITHFUL FRIEND

I fight for others, not against them; rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep.

- Who in your circles is rejoicing or weeping, and what are you doing to love them well in this season?
- Who is the Lord prompting you to invest in, and how are you guiding them to their next step?

CONFIDENT CULTIVATOR

I empower others to fulfill their God-given calling for Kingdom impact.

- What is currently fueling or distracting your investment in others?
- How are you positioning yourself to invest in the next person?

ICEBREAKER QUESTION IDEAS:

(Quick ones are in bold):

- 1. What was your first job?**
2. Tell us about a memorable time of cooking in the kitchen?
- 3. What household chore do you actually enjoy?**
- 4. What's the longest trip you've ever been on?**
5. Say a line from your favorite movie (see if the group can guess it).
6. What do you wish someone taught you a long time ago?
- 7. What is the weirdest job you've ever had?**
- 8. What is your worst habit?**
- 9. If you could be any item in the grocery store what would you be?**
10. What's the weirdest food you have eaten?
11. Share of an encounter you had with a famous person.
12. What was your favorite hangout as a teenager?
13. What takes a lot of time but is totally worth it?
14. What is the worst meal you've ever made?
- 15. What is one non-living item you can't live without?**
- 16. If you could only eat one thing for dinner (breakfast or lunch), for the rest of your life what would it be?**
- 17. What's the last song you listened to?**
- 18. Share two words that describe you best.**
19. What is your biggest phobia?

20. If you were in the Olympics, what sport would it be for?
21. What is one moment in your life that has defined you?
- 22. If you could only have one of your five senses, which one would it be?**
23. Share of a time when you laughed at an inappropriate time.
24. What website or app doesn't exist, but you really wish it did?
25. If you could be a fly on a wall, where would you most want to be?
- 26. What is your favorite soda?**
- 27. What do you think the ideal age to be is?**
- 28. If you could be a fictitious superhero, who would you be? Or what super power would you most want?**
29. Greatest peer pressure as an adult?
- 30. What is your favorite music genre?**
31. How do you react when people sing "Happy Birthday" to you in a restaurant?
32. When someone finds out what you do, or where you are from, what questions do they always ask you?
- 33. Who is your favorite singer?**
- 34. What topic could you give a 20-minute presentation on without any preparation?**
- 35. In just a few words, what is at the top of your bucket list?**
36. How would you describe God to a child?
37. What color best describes you and why?
38. What was the high point of last week? The low point?
- 39. What one word would be your theme for the year?**
40. Name one person who has had the biggest impact in your life and why?
- 41. If I could visit any place in the world, it would be...**
42. If I had a million dollars to spend for the benefit of mankind...
43. The thing that causes me the greatest satisfaction is...
44. What is your favorite memory as a child?
45. What was your worst haircut experience?
46. What's your most embarrassing moment?

APPENDIX

47. What would you do with an extra free day off of work?
48. Where would you go if you could go anywhere in the world?
- 49. If you could become an animal for one day, which one would it be?**
- 50. What is one secret place in your house that you only clean on special occasions (like mother-in-law visiting)?**
51. If you knew your time was cut short, what's one thing you'd change about the way you are now living?
52. If you could be famous, what would you be famous for?
53. If you could go back in time and not return, what would you try to accomplish even if you knew you might change the course of history?
54. If someone were to write a book about you, what do you think the title and theme would be?
55. If your animals could talk, what would they tell you?
56. Which emoji best describes you and why?
- 57. What was the make / model / year / color of your first car?**
58. What's your biggest pet peeve?
59. What scene in a movie always gives you a certain feeling, every time you watch it?
60. Favorite Christmas Carol and why?
61. If you could have coffee with anyone in the history of ever, who would it be and why?
62. What were your favorite tv shows when you were growing up?

Notes



*Making Disciples
Who Make Disciples*

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