

Small Groups

SERMON-BASED STUDY GUIDE

SERMON ON THE MOUNT – Week [1] – *An Intro to Human Flourishing*

September 10, 2023

[Group Leader Tips in Red]

DIGGING IN:

1. Share a time when you “bit off more than you could chew.”
2. How might reading and letting the Sermon on the Mount affect your life feel like “biting off more than you can chew?”
3. When you hear the phrase “Kingdom of God,” what comes to mind”? (How would you define or describe it?) **(Have group members write down their answer to this question individually, then share with the group).**

MAKING IT REAL:

4. Imagine yourself as a first-century Jew, waiting for the coming Messiah (who would, they imagined, save them from Roman domination and lead them into their own kingdom). What types of people would they be expecting the Messiah to associate with?
 - Individually read Matthew 4:17-25, and list the types of people who Jesus called to Himself. **(A copy of the scripture passage is at the end of this guide; you can print it out for each group member. As they read, they can circle each type of person who is identified, and can use the sheet for additional notes).**
 - How did Jesus’ choices and teaching fly in the face of what the Jews were expecting?
5. Jesus stated in Matthew 4:17, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Why do you think that “repent” was his *first* instruction for his listeners?
6. In his sermon, Alex made several statements about the Kingdom of God. Choose one or more of these statements and respond: Do you agree/disagree? What are the implications if the statement is true?
 - “The Kingdom includes Image-Bearers who rule.” (Gen 1:26)

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- “In the Kingdom of God, God is going back to the beginning and putting things back together as they were made to be.”
- “The call of the Kingdom is bigger than commercial success or family loyalty or any other values.”
- “The Kingdom is the way to human flourishing – This is the best way to be human.”

7. One more Alex quote: “The Kingdom begins as Jesus climbs a mountain with a rag-tag bunch of misfits (those who were not qualified.)” (You may want to refer back to responses to question #4).

- Have each person write down one or two things in their own life that might make them feel disqualified for the Kingdom of God (if they didn’t know the reality of Jesus’ work on the cross for them).
- Have each person say (popcorn style, so no one feels obligated by going around the circle), “Where do I fit into this Kingdom plan? I _____[their disqualification]_____. Is there a place for me?” Have the group respond, “_____ [name] _____, You are invited to the Kingdom! Welcome!
- I encourage you to walk your group through the above exercise. You might want to go first to set the example and make it feel safe. But if you choose not to do the exercise as a group, you could lead them through it by reading it slowly, having them imagine asking Jesus the questions, and Jesus Himself speaking the answers.

PRAYER IDEAS

- Pray for your group, and for South Fellowship Church, that we will become a living example of the Kingdom of God on earth.
- Break into pairs and pray for one another, that you will each move toward Jesus during this series as you learn from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount what human flourishing looks like. Pray that your hearts will be open to whatever Jesus wants to do in you to help you live in His way with His heart.
- Pray for any individual prayer requests.

WANT TO DIG A LITTLE DEEPER?

(Extra Bible study ideas)

Go to www.biblegateway.com. Search on “Kingdom of God” and then “Kingdom of Heaven.” For each scripture that comes up, write down what you notice to be true about the Kingdom. Highlight the ones that surprise or trouble you. Ask God to begin to show you what your place is in the Kingdom and what aspect of human flourishing He might ask you to focus on.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Red Couch Theology Podcast

If you or group members have questions around parts of the sermon that are not included in the discussion guide, it’s always helpful to listen to *Red Couch Theology*, where Alex and Aaron talk about the sermon and answer questions that come in from people in the congregation. <https://guysdrinkingtea.podbean.com/>

What If Jesus Was Serious?: A Visual Guide to the Teachings of Jesus We Love to Ignore, by Skye Jethani.

The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary, by Jonathan T. Pennington

Matthew 4:17-25

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven^(U) has come near."

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee,^(W) he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter^(X) and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. **19** "Come, follow me,"^(Y) Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." **20** At once they left their nets and followed him.^(Z)

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John.^(AA) They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, **22** and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.^(AB)

23 Jesus went throughout Galilee,^(AC) teaching in their synagogues,^(AD) proclaiming the good news^(AE) of the kingdom,^(AF) and healing every disease and sickness among the people.^(AG) **24** News about him spread all over Syria,^(AH) and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed,^(AI) those having seizures,^(AJ) and the paralyzed;^(AK) and he healed them. **25** Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,^(G) Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.^(AL)