

Life Group Questions

Kingdom Power – a sermon series in Matthew 8-10

Competing Fears / Pastor Ray Harms-Wiebe / Matthew 10:34-42/ Dec. 4/5, 2021

To the Life Group leader: thank you for your ministry leading this Life Group. **Take time to review the questions, selecting those you believe will be most helpful for your group study.** You will not have time to use all the questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you lead, as you select questions, and as you guide the discussion. As a team, we're praying for the Holy Spirit to guide you, lead you and speak through you.

Sometimes we are surprised when we realize there is a price for following Jesus. We expect Jesus' presence in our lives to usher in complete wholeness and tranquility. But, Jesus is a truth-teller. His words in Matthew 10 are hard words, but they are faithful words. He speaks the truth in love. What may it cost to follow Jesus?

Reconnect

Come together with these preliminary questions:

- What have you sacrificed for in your life?
- What made you willing to sacrifice?
- Was the sacrifice you made worth the result you achieved or experienced?

Open in Prayer

Invite God to speak into the lives of your group members through His Spirit, His Word, and through each other.

Message Recap

Review the message using these questions

1. What stood out to you most in this week's message?
2. What was the most meaningful thing you heard in the message? Why?
3. What questions are still lingering?

Choose discussion and application questions

1) Following Jesus

Matthew 10:34, *"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."*

- a) Pastor Ray said, a sword appears where peace is expected. Is Jesus not the Prince of Peace of Isaiah 9:6-7? Was not his coming the dawn of peace on earth (Luke 2:14)? Are the disciples not to bless the homes they enter with peace (vs. 13)? Did Jesus not say, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (5:9)?
 - i) Why did the "Prince of Peace" say he came to us with a "sword"?
 - ii) Why would Jesus be so negative about the implications of following him?

- iii) Many people are put off by Jesus' claims of exclusivity. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No comes to the Father except through me." How do you reconcile Jesus' words with the current focus on "tolerance" and "inclusion?"

2) Following Jesus separates

Jesus said: *John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*"

1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. Matthew 10:28a Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.*

Matthew 10:35-36, *For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.* ³⁶ *And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.*

- a) Why would following Jesus bring division to a family?
- b) Has anyone in your group experienced conflict because of their decision to follow Jesus?
- c) The Bible tells us that Jesus experienced conflict within his own family. Mark 3:21 tells us that Jesus' family thought he was "out of his mind" because of what he was teaching.
 - i) First century Jews placed very high value on family, why would Jesus preach a gospel that placed family relationships in jeopardy?
 - ii) Family relationships often superseded commitment to God for first century Jews. Jesus challenges the priority of family over following God.
 - (1) How does Jesus' call to prioritise faith over family strike you?
 - (2) As Christ-followers how have you processed that calling?

3) Following Jesus is often tested at home

Matthew 10:37 *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

- a) Pastor Ray said that when Jesus says the phrase "not worthy of me" means "does not have what it takes to follow me."
 - i) Why does Jesus make such an absolute demand on his followers?
 - ii) How did you process this call to unqualified allegiance when you gave your life to Jesus?
 - (1) If your group is struggling with this concept it may be helpful to review what Jesus did for us.
 - (a) His submission to his Father and his laying aside his divinity in coming to earth. Phil. 2:5-11
 - (b) His absolute commitment to us demonstrated by his death for our sins.
 - (c) His forgiveness of our sins and adoption into his family

4) Following Jesus demands supreme allegiance

Pastor Ray said, "Jesus instructs his disciples to love their spouses, families, friends and even their enemies (5:44-47), but they must love Jesus supremely above all others. This repeats what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you"* (6:33). Spouses must be honored (19:1-12) and parents must be honored (15:3-9), BUT Jesus must be honored above all others."

- a) If Jesus brings the “sword” why would we surrender to him completely?
 - i) Take time to articulate what Jesus has done for you?
 - ii) List out Jesus’ attributes and promises.
 - iii) Jesus continues to raise the bar on following him. In Matthew 10:38 Jesus said, *“And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”*
 - (1) *What does it mean to “take up our cross?”*
- Note: “To take up one’s cross” is to die to self-will. A disciple must deny himself, take up his cross (that is, embrace God’s will, no matter the cost), and follow Christ (in the same way that the cross was the Father’s will for Jesus).

5) Following Jesus demands death to self

Matthew 10:39 *Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

Pastor Ray said, the paradox could not be starker. Those who lose their life, whether in self-denial or martyrdom, will ‘find’ it in the age to come. Those who preserve their life now, by living for themselves, and refusing to surrender to Jesus, lose it in the age to come.

We die to ourselves to find the life that will never be lost – true life in Jesus. “Such grace . . . is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.” Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*.

- a) How do you understand “finding your life in Jesus?”
- b) Jim Elliot famously said, *“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”*
 - i) Discuss your understanding of Jim’s statement.
- c) Matthew 10:40-42, *“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹ The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. ⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”*
 - i) How can we live out Jesus’ words in these verses?
 - (1) What does it mean to receive a prophet, a righteous person or to extend a cup of water?
 - (2) What are the implications of our acts of kindness and respect?

6) Following Jesus demands that we be family

Mark 3:35 *“For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Mark 10:29–31 ²⁹ *Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”*

- a) Jesus promised those who sacrificed to follow him that he would reward them in this world and the world to come.
 - i) Given our very individualistic world what does it mean for Christ-followers to be “family” for and to each other?
 - ii) How do we replace the fathers and mothers we’ve lost?
 - iii) Who can you bring into your “family”?
 - iv) Ask God to show you how to be family for others.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What have we sacrificed to follow Jesus?
2. Is there something Jesus is asking you to surrender today?
3. Who will you be family to this Christmas Season?

Choose Your Next Step

What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?

If people have shared their desire to discern Jesus' leading in their lives, commit to following up with each other during the week. Call, text, or email each other words of encouragement, specific prayer requests, or answers to prayer.

Closing Prayer

This may be a great week to split into groups of 2 or 3 to make sure everyone is prayed for. This will also facilitate greater openness and transparency in prayer.