

life groups' sermon guide

rewarded with Christ



LIFE GROUPS

doing life together

Life Groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for the life application of the Core 4 elements of worship, grow, serve, and share.

“But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

– Mark 10:43-45

Christianity, properly applied, is a paradox. On the hand, Christianity is driven by love and promises eternal life for those who believe in Christ's death and resurrection. Yet, on the other hand, the Christian worldview often defies conventional thinking and our natural human impulses. For example, we are told that the richest among us are those who are poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). The first shall be last, and the last shall be first (Matthew 19:30). Whoever wants to save his life will lose it (Matthew 16:25). And so it goes....

Q: What are some of the other paradoxes found in Christianity?

Q: The late Chuck Colson used to talk about the counter-cultural nature of Christianity. How does true Christianity run counter to our culture?

Discussion:

In Mark 10:35-45 we find two of the disciples—James and John—asking Jesus to allow them to be seated in the most prestigious positions on His right and His left in heaven. These were the seats of privilege in that culture, and it was very bold for James and John to make such a request of Jesus. In fact, verse 41 tells us that the other disciples were indignant when they heard about this request.

Q: What do you think motivated James and John to make so bold a request of Jesus?

Q: Why were the other disciples indignant when they found out about James and John's request?

Q: What might their indignation reveal about their own motivation and heart condition?

Abraham Lincoln once said, “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.”

Q: What was the point that President Lincoln was making?

Q: How might it apply to this scenario between Jesus and James and John?

Q: Is it wrong to have power and/or prestige? Why or why not?

Q: As Christians, how are we to steward any power and prestige that we may have at any given time in our life?

Discerning God's decision-making

Pastor Matt makes a telling observation by comparing the story of James and John's request to the later request of the blind beggar, Bartimaeus. All three of these men asked something of Jesus. And yet, Jesus didn't grant all of their requests.

In fact, Bartimaeus was the only one who received what he had asked for from Jesus—his sight. And Scripture tells us (in verse 52) that immediately after receiving his sight, he began to follow Jesus.

Q: Why would Jesus say "No" to James and John, and yet, say "Yes" to Bartimaeus?

Q: How does one's motivation in asking affect whether or not Jesus was going to grant the request?

Q: What can we learn from this about our lives and requests of God?

There are people who assume that sometimes God doesn't answer their prayers. That is not true; God always answers prayer, just not necessarily in the way(s) we assume He should.

Q: What answers does God give to our prayers?

Q: Why do people assume that God should always answer "Yes," and if He doesn't, then He must not be answering our prayers (or further still, that He must not love them)?

Q: Should God always say "Yes" to every one of our prayers? Why or why not?

Q: Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. It says that Paul prayed fervently that God would remove the "thorn in his flesh," but God chose not to. What did Paul discover the purpose of his "thorn" to be?

Q: Read Philippians 4:11-13. What was the secret that Paul learned in his life?

Q: How might this perspective apply to our lives?

Application

Mother Teresa, the Catholic nun who served the lepers and outcasts in the slums of Calcutta, India, was invited to speak at the 1994 National Prayer breakfast. It became an unforgettable speech for those in attendance and resonated across the country. For her message of truth and justice,

delivered in a barely audible voice, thundered down in the tradition of the prophet Amos (5:24) as she powerfully excoriated the leadership in America over the ongoing atrocity of abortion.¹

What was most captivating, beyond the power of her message, was the manner in which she spoke, born out of a lifetime dedicated to helping the most destitute in our world. Her words were inseparably intertwined with her life and mission.

Q: How is it that such a wisp of woman could speak with such power? What was it that gave her the authority to bring a prophetic voice of truth to bear in our culture?

Q: How did Mother Teresa steward her power and prestige, and what can we learn from her example?

In fact, the paradox of Christianity that was introduced at the beginning of this discussion found its perfect fulfillment in the life of Jesus Christ. He was the ultimate servant leader, and He called His disciples to the same. Consider the apostle Paul's challenge to the Philippian Christians:

"In humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant." – Philippians 2:3-5, 7

Likewise, we are all leaders in one way or another, whether we possess the formal gift of leadership or not. Leadership is about intentional influence. John Maxwell writes, "Sociologists tell us that even the most introverted individual will influence ten thousand other people during his or her lifetime!"² To what end, then, are we influencing the people around us? Our answer to this question is grounded in our contentedness with God and His plan for our lives, which helps us stay on mission.

Q: Go back to page 1 of this study guide and reread Mark 10:43-45. How does Jesus say that His followers are to be different?

Q: Why are supposed to be different? For example, how does this understanding affect our being "on mission" for Christ?

Q: What does it mean to be a "servant leader"?

Q: Why is it difficult sometimes to consistently practice servant leadership?

Ultimately, as the Mark 10 passage reveals, much of life actually comes down to trust. Do we trust God, or are we inclined to take matters into our own hands? God asks us to trust Him, but He doesn't force our hand. It must be a choice, a matter of the will. When we do, as Paul found out, we move from a focus on the temporary trials and tribulations toward an eternal perspective and the

¹ Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "Whatever you do..." speech to the 1994 National Prayer breakfast, February 3, 1994, in Washington, D.C. The text of her speech can be found at: <http://www.priestsforlife.org/brochures/mtspeech.html>. For reaction to Mother Teresa's speech, see Peggy Noonan, "Still, Small Voice" Crisis magazine, 1 February 1998. Accessed online 25 April 2012 at: <http://www.peggynoonan.com/article.php?article=31>.

² John Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 2.

hopeful promise of life everlasting (2 Corinthians 4:7-9, 16-18). And in the end, that changes everything.

Question for Reflection: Have you ever found yourself playing the “Keeping Up With the Jones” comparison game with your neighbors or coworkers or other people in your life—lamenting what they have and wishing you had the same? In what do you base your contentedness? As you identify those areas, confess to God those times in your life when you struggle to trust Him, and ask for His help to trust Him for the unseen future. Are you willing to do what it takes work through that process? What can you do today (or this week) to begin that process?

Also, take some time to think about what servant leadership looks like in your life. Who has God placed in your life right now that you can intentionally influence by serving and loving them? What can you do today (or this week) to serve them more?