

Weekly Study Guide

The week of April 3, 2016

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SOUL TRAINING EXERCISES

Option 1:

Christian growth takes practice. Nobody runs a marathon with their first step out the door. Use these weekly "soul training exercises" to help you practice cooperating with the Holy Spirit so that you can hear and walk by the Spirit's leading all throughout your life.

The Kingdom of God is any place where God rules. Take some time this week to use your imagination and ask "What if God were in charge here?" You might imagine your workplace, your home, family, your neighborhood, or any other sphere of life. How would it be different if this were a place where God was in charge—if it were a province of His Kingdom? How would you be different here if you saw yourself as a child of God, living in his unshakeable Kingdom? As you imagine this, ask God to help you live into the reality of his Kingdom in your daily life.

Option 1 & 2:

Regular habits of private Bible reading strengthen our relationship with God and teach us how to follow Jesus. In addition to the thematic exercise above, you can use this guide each week to lead you through relevant sections of the Bible.

Daily Readings

MONDAY

Matthew 3:13-17

TUESDAY

Matthew 4:1-11

WEDNESDAY

Matthew 4:12-17

THURSDAY

Matthew 4:18-22

FRIDAY

Matthew 4:23-25

SATURDAY

Matthew 5:1-12

Group Discussion

CONNECT

Have you ever tried to plant or grow a garden? How did it go?

THIS WEEK'S LEARNING GOAL

This week we are learning that Jesus invites us into the presence and power of the Kingdom of God.

LEARNING FROM THE BIBLE TOGETHER

Read the first teachings of Jesus according to the Gospels of Mark and Matthew in **Mark 1:14-15** and **Matthew 4:12-17**.

- What was Jesus' headline message according to the biographers of Jesus?
- Jesus had much more to explain about the Kingdom than this, but what can you learn even from these short passages?

Jesus taught his disciples to pray for God's Kingdom to be realized on earth. **Read Matthew 6:9-13.**

- After the opening address to God, what's the first priority in this model Christian prayer?
- What if you tried to understand the Kingdom of God based on the contents that Jesus teaches us to pray for. As a group, try to describe the character of the Kingdom based on this prayer.

Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God had come, but it didn't materialize in the way many people expected. Many of Jesus' parables are told to explain his surprising vision for the Kingdom.

- Read three different Kingdom parables in **Matthew 13:24-30, 31-32, and 33.**
- What lessons do we learn about the Kingdom in these stories?
- Jesus used a lot of agricultural images to explain the Kingdom in his context. Brainstorm a little as a group. What images might you use to try and communicate these same lessons in a different context?

- Read the Kingdom parables in **Matthew 13:44-46**. What point is Jesus making about the Kingdom here?

SOUL TRAINING EXERCISES

As a group, recall last week's soul training exercise (writing a letter to God). Did you learn or experience anything you'd like to share with your group? Now, look at the soul training exercises on the front of this study guide and get ready to practice them this week. Is there a particular time of day or some other specific commitment that would help you succeed in doing these exercises?

PRAY

Share your prayer concerns with one another. Pray together the prayer of Jesus that we read in Matthew 6:9-13. You can choose a single translation to help you pray in unison or different translations for variety.



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