



GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 9

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who has loved you well? How did you know they loved you?

A CLASH OF KINGDOMS

Since we started Matthew, there's been an undercurrent of tension. Jesus' teachings and actions challenge common perceptions about how the world works and about the kind of kingdom God desires to rule over His good world.

God's kingdom is an upside-down affair, where the proud and powerful are brought low. Where those who serve others are lifted high. Where peace, love, and sacrifice win the day. But not everyone believes in this kingdom. And worse, some are threatened by the message Jesus brings. Rulers don't take kindly to those who challenge or usurp their authority.

And so we've come to the boiling point. Two kingdoms are about to collide. The kingdom of peace and love and the kingdom of power and pride. Which will emerge victorious?

Even though we live thousands of years later, we, too, must reckon with the same clash of kingdoms. Every day we face circumstances and opportunities that challenge us to choose between peace and power, sacrifice and selfishness, or generosity and greed.

When Jesus calls us to lay down our lives, it's easy to think about that command in terms of our eventual death. Would we be willing to become martyrs in the name of Jesus?

But what if Jesus is calling us to a much greater kind of death to self? What if Jesus' call to lay down our lives is a call to lay down our *way of life*? Are we willing to die to ourselves when it comes to our plans, our strategies, our spending, our devotions, our attention, and so on? This is a much more difficult charge.

There are two kingdoms vying for your attention, for your way of life. The good news is you get to choose which one wins each and every day, moment by moment. Hannah recently shared the prayer of Corrie ten Boom. May we echo Corrie's words this week, inviting Jesus to reshape our way of life in his image:

**Lord Jesus, I offer myself for Your people. In any way. Any place. Any time.
Amen.**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. How has this week's reading added color to what you think about Jesus?
3. Last year, our church did a series called [Cultivate](#), all about the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Perhaps today is a good time for a fruit audit. What fruit are you bearing now? What fruit are you lacking in?
4. Read together Matthew 22:32-40 about the Greatest Commandment. What do you think it looks like to love God with all our heart, mind, and strength?
5. What does it look like to sacrificially love our neighbor as ourselves?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Throughout Lent, we will be pulling these practices from our [Lenten Practice Guide](#). These practices invite you to either give something up or take something on, with the hope of simplifying your life, standing in solidarity with those who are suffering, and becoming people who love God and others well. Our prayer is that God would meet you in the midst of these new rhythms so that you would experience in real, tangible ways the transforming love of Jesus Christ and the hope of the Resurrection.

Week Three: Spend Sacrificially

Where our money goes, so too goes our heart. Our financial habits tell us a lot about what we value. This week, as much as you are able, spend as little money as possible. Only pay for essentials—groceries, gas, medical expenses, etc. For example, eat at home instead of going to restaurants, don't spend money on clothes or personal items, and avoid any other frivolous spending. At the end of the week, reflect on your experience: *What did this exercise reveal about your spending habits? How did living more frugally help you empathize with those who live on the margins?*