



Your Kingdom Come
February 9 | Group Guide

Prayer (5 minutes)

Open with prayer. Ask for God's Spirit to be present to your group. Pray also for vulnerability and openness. Finally, pray for formation into Christlikeness through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Debrief Men's Conference (10 minutes)

This is a time for men to share their experience with the group. If the men in your group did not attend the conference, or if you are in an all-female group, you can omit this section.

Invite the men who attended the conference to answer the following questions:

- If you could provide a snapshot from the conference that would help you explain what God did there, what picture would you take? Why is that picture significant?
- What was a highlight of the conference for you?
- Which breakout did you attend? What did you find helpful from that session?
- How do you expect to be different because of being at the conference?
- How can we pray for you and other men in response to this experience?

Talk about What's Coming (10 minutes)

Share with your group that over the next eight weeks (February 16 – April 6), your group time will look a little different. Each week, your group will split up into gendered groups. Men will be reading and discussing *Fighting Shadows* by Jon Tyson and Jefferson Bethke. The women will continue studying Matthew, with a special emphasis on prayer.

If you have not yet worked out the logistics of how your group will provide/create space for men and women to meet separately, you may wish to do that now.

Discussion of Matthew 8–9 (15 minutes)

In this section of Matthew, Jesus is shown performing one miracle after another. He demonstrates his power of sickness, over nature, and even over death.

Discuss the following in your group.

- What stood out to you from the sermon on Sunday?

- Invite different people to read the following passages out loud: Matthew 8:1-4, Matthew 8:5-13, Matthew 8:23-27, and Matthew 9:18-26. Encourage people to imagine being a witness to these events. What conclusions would you draw about Jesus?
- Ask someone to read Matthew 8:16-17. What do these verses reveal about why Matthew is detailing these healing miracles?

In the midst of all these miracles, Matthew himself enters the story. Read Matthew 9:9-12.

- Why do the Pharisees object to Jesus having dinner with Matthew?
- How would you put Jesus' response in your own words?
- Do you find yourself identifying more with the Pharisees or with the "sinners"? Why?
- What does it say about Jesus that he "eats with sinners"? How can that truth shift how you relate to him?

Preview of *Fighting Shadows* (10 minutes)

Each week in their discussion of *Fighting Shadows*, the men will examine one of seven "shadows": despair, loneliness, shame, lust, ambition, futility, and apathy.

These shadows sound familiar to both men and women. And they would have resonated with the men and women Jesus met in Matthew 8–9. The "sinners" Jesus met are people, like us, who fall short of God's glory, who are driven by flesh instead of Spirit, who break God's law.

The men at The Creek will be spending significant time addressing these "shadows" over the next eight weeks, but these shadows aren't just a struggle for men. It's important for both men and women in life groups to reflect on the role these "shadows" play in our lives.

- Which of the seven shadows addressed in *Fighting Shadows* (despair, loneliness, shame, lust, ambition, futility, and apathy) is most common in people you know? Which do you feel like you struggle with the most? Explain.
- Why is it difficult for people today to acknowledge struggles (like despair, loneliness, or shame) and to embrace Jesus Christ as your source of hope?
- How can Jesus' invitation to Matthew, someone who definitely had "shadows," be an encouragement to us?

Prayer (5 minutes)

Pray for what God will do in life groups at The Creek over the next eight weeks. Invite one person to pray for the women and one person to pray for the men. (In mixed groups, a man could pray for the women and a woman could pray for the men.)

Consider asking God for:

- Increased vulnerability
- Transformation in community
- Deeper relationships with God and with each other
- Light to shine in dark places