



Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously,
and he will give you everything you need.

Matthew 6:33



THE KINGDOM-FIRST LIFE



*A six-week series for small groups
to follow up a Life Action event*



LIFE ACTION

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ARE YOU LIVING OUT MATTHEW 6:33?

Seek the
Kingdom of God
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MATTHEW 6:33

Jesus calls us to a lifestyle of radical faith and bold reprioritization: He calls us to *seek God's kingdom first, above everything else*. At Life Action, we believe this is the road we can all enthusiastically walk—toward all-out commitment, toward spiritual renewal, toward the kind of life Jesus died and rose again to make possible.

Over the next six weeks, we invite you to continue forward on this road, with both your Bible and your heart in the same position—open. From there, prayerfully, we'll learn what God has in store for us, and how we really can put our revived *life* into kingdom *action*.

Overview for Group Leaders

WEEK ONE

I Said YES to God—Now What?

Life Action calls people to humble repentance and to fresh obedience—to say yes to God in every category of life. This first lesson will help your group to review the areas of obedience mentioned during your Life Action event; to share with each other the specifics of their “yes” to the Lord; and, in the spirit of James 1:22, to take real action.

WEEK TWO

The New Priority of My Revived Life

Matthew 6:33 provides a helpful summary of a focused, well-prioritized life, where God’s kingdom priorities come first, ahead of earthly pursuits. This lesson will help your group consider and discuss what these new kingdom priorities are and how they can be applied in day-to-day life. A revived life in Christ will result in kingdom action that honors Him!

WEEK THREE

My Mission Starts Here

The Great Commission is a critical focus for any life lived with a kingdom-first mentality. This lesson will challenge your group to embrace their mission within the Great Commission—conversing, dreaming, and praying together to move forward practically. This lesson can also set up a specific opportunity for people to discuss the church’s mission plans, opportunities, etc.

WEEK FOUR

A Life Message Speaks Loudest

As we walk the road of humility, repentance, and obedience, our lives will change dramatically. It is this “life message” that speaks more than our words ever could. This is the message about the power of the Holy Spirit working in us! This lesson will invite your group to review their Life Action experience through the lens of how it has impacted their relationships with family, work associates, etc.

WEEK FIVE

Focusing Prayer on Mission

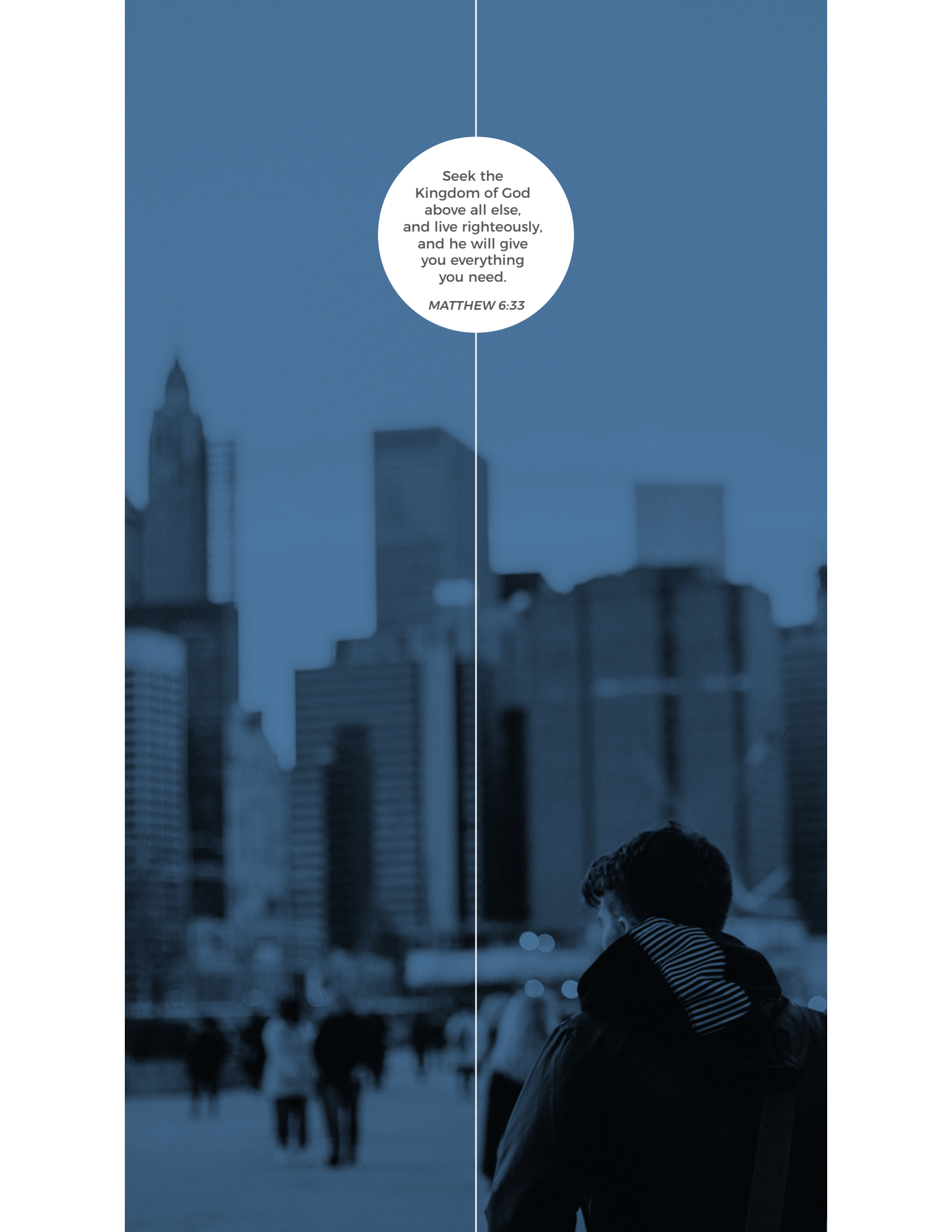
During the Life Action event, people were encouraged to pray for revival in their own hearts, and for renewal among the church family. The long-term vision for prayer in the church needs to go beyond revival, however, toward mission. This lesson will equip you and your group to begin praying for workers in the harvest fields, both nearby and far away, and to begin praying for real opportunities to engage with friends and neighbors who need Christ.

WEEK SIX

The Kingdom-First Life, Forever

Seeking God’s kingdom first changes everything about our priorities, dreams, and direction. This lesson will challenge your group to develop an eternal, faith-filled mindset—beyond the hustle and distraction of daily life. If there is one biblical key, one characteristic necessary for maintaining our kingdom-first orientation, it is to make sure our hearts are set on the right things—things above.

***Commit everything you do to the LORD.
Trust him, and he will help you. Psalm 37:5***



Seek the
Kingdom of God
above all else,
and live righteously,
and he will give
you everything
you need.

MATTHEW 6:33

Lesson #1

I Said YES to God—Now What?

Jesus invites us into an exciting life of obedient faith. As we've recently learned together, this life of faith begins with our own humble response to God. As we say yes to Him, He begins to revive our souls and fill our lives with purpose.

CURIOSITY QUESTIONS

Did any aspect of the Life Action event surprise you?

How would you explain what this was all about to a person who missed it? How would you summarize what we all heard and learned?

MOVING INTO GOD'S WORD

Luke 6:46-49 – We learn from this text that there are two possible responses to the Word of God in our lives: a wise response (obedience) and a foolish response (disobedience).

Based on Jesus' rhetorical question in verse 46, why do you think so many people who declare Jesus as their Lord fail to submit to His leadership? Has there ever been a time in your life when that was your story?

What do you think of the metaphor Jesus used to describe a disobedient life in the parable? Why would He use such a dramatic picture?

James 1:22-25 – We discover the same principle here, that merely hearing the Word of God is no substitute for putting it into practice.

Why would James call disobedience a self-deception in verse 22?

Life Action asked us to "look in the mirror" quite a bit, honestly evaluating our spiritual condition. How can we, individually and as a group, avoid the error mentioned in verse 24?



Titus 2:11-14 – This text offers us hope that an obedient YES lifestyle is really possible, due to the amazing grace of God and the power of what Jesus did on the cross.

These verses describe some of the reasons Jesus died, beyond simply making provision for our forgiveness. Based on verses 13-14, what does Jesus want to do in your life?

MAKING IT PERSONAL

During the Life Action event, there were a number of areas brought up for prayer, discussion, and self-evaluation. Like David in Psalm 139:23-24, we were encouraged to ask God to really search our hearts. So, what did He reveal?

In the spaces provided below, list up to three areas of obedience you would like to focus on in the months ahead, in response to what the Holy Spirit revealed about your life. Then, if you feel comfortable doing so, share one or two of these areas with the group for prayer, encouragement, and accountability.

Area of Obedience: _____

I plan to take a step forward in this area by _____

Area of Obedience: _____

I plan to take a step forward in this area by _____

Area of Obedience: _____

I plan to take a step forward in this area by _____

PRAYER TIME

Use Titus 2:11-14 as an outline for your time of prayer. Phrase by phrase, work through the text and allow members of your group to pray conversationally on each point.

Pray for each other, particularly regarding any areas of obedience that were shared publicly.

Lesson #2

The New Priority of My Revived Life

When Jesus told His disciples not to worry about the world's priorities, He gave them something far more important to concern themselves with: the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:31-33). This shift in values can change everything about our perspective; and if we really grab hold of what Jesus is saying here, it can change our daily schedule as well.

CURIOSITY QUESTIONS

Growing up, what would you say the top priorities were in your home? To what extent have you carried those priorities into your own lifestyle as an adult?

Many people admit they have a hard time prioritizing in today's culture. We certainly have freedom to prioritize as we wish, so why don't we?

MOVING INTO GOD'S WORD

Matthew 6:19-34 – Instead of organizing life around the pursuit of earthly power, praise, and riches, Jesus spoke of a kingdom organized around humility, love, and faith. In this text He calls us to rethink our attachment to money as security, inviting us instead to “worry” about more important things. Why do you think we naturally end up worrying so much?

In matters of earthly importance, how can we tell the difference between wise concern and sinful worry?

Jesus calls us in verse 33 to consider areas of eternal importance—His kingdom and His righteousness. How might we practically understand these terms? What do they mean for us?

Seeking His kingdom:

Seeking His righteousness:



Romans 12:1-2 – Paul follows eleven chapters of Romans that speak to the exceedingly abundant grace of God by asking us to think about what our response will be to His mercy. When we see how much love God has poured into our lives, what will we say? How will we act? What do these verses teach about our priorities moving forward?

The last part of verse two gives us hope that the priorities God has in mind for us are knowable, and they are certainly desirable as well! According to the text, what must we do to gain a right view of these priorities, and to feel confident in our next steps?

Matthew 22:34-40 – In this famous exchange, Jesus reveals the heartbeat of all God's laws—essentially, the purpose of our lives. How does this help us clarify our personal priorities, and help us understand the meaning of what a kingdom-first life would entail?

MAKING IT PERSONAL

I would like to reduce my prioritization of:

I would like to increase my prioritization of:

During the Life Action event, I was challenged to make _____ more of a priority in my life. So far, I have followed up on this challenge by: _____

PRAYER TIME

To whatever extent is appropriate, share before the Lord and your group what is written in the two boxes above, and pray to offer yourself afresh to the Lord, as Romans 12:1 describes.

Then, take time to pray for each other regarding the priorities Jesus set for us in Matthew 6:33.

Lesson #3

My Mission Starts Here

Following our conversation in the last session on priorities, we want to look specifically at our own mission within the Great Commission (Jesus' command for us to make disciples of all nations, as stated in Matthew 28:19-20). The reason God has us on earth today, and the reason our hearts are still beating right now, is that this mission is not yet complete!

CURIOSITY QUESTIONS

When in your own life can you remember having a very clear mission to accomplish (not necessarily "spiritual")? In that situation, what gave you clarity of mission? Did you accomplish it?

What holds people back, in your opinion, from living out the Great Commission? It is quite obvious this was a priority for Jesus, so why do so many of His followers lack focus on it?

MOVING INTO GOD'S WORD

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 – Paul was clear about the mission he had been given: He was an ambassador for Christ in the world, offering people the good news of God's love and reconciling grace. Who was the "ambassador" who introduced Jesus to you for the first time, and what was the scenario?

What do you think motivated that individual (or group) to make the effort to reach out to you?

Have you ever had an opportunity to share the gospel with someone? Tell the group about it.

The idea of being an ambassador implies more than just occasional volunteering or a temporary mission project; rather, it is an identity. What would change about your life if you owned the "ambassador" title in a personal way? What might change about your interactions with your work, school, or community?

Luke 5:1-11 – Peter was also given a clear metaphor to describe his mission in life. In this case he would become a fisher of men, rather than just a fisherman. He would be mobilized by Jesus to share the good news and invite many others into the kingdom of God.

In the miracle that precedes Peter's calling, we see a contrast between his own best efforts and those efforts empowered by Jesus. How does this apply to our mission in life?

At the core of discipleship is a humble yes to God—the choice we were encouraged to make when Life Action was in our church, and really, the choice the Holy Spirit has always been calling us to make. What were some of the things that happened in Peter's life because he said yes? (Make a list as a group of the ways God used Peter from this point forward.)

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Is there anything holding me back from saying yes to God and to His mission for my life?

I understand that a key part of my mission is sharing my faith and making disciples, as explained in Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; and Acts 1:8. Where are some of the most obvious places I can begin doing this today?

Being a witness for Christ involves sharing what we've seen and experienced. Which stories would I be ready to share with someone if the opportunity presented itself to do so (or if I made the opportunity to do so)?

- My testimony of becoming a Christian
- My story of coming back to God after being away from Him
- A recent story of God's power or intervention in my life
- The testimony of how God has revived or refreshed me recently
- A story of sharing my faith with someone, and the impact it made
- An important lesson about faith or life I had to learn

Being ready with stories of this nature can help us feel confident in our "ambassador" or "fisherman" role. We don't necessarily have to have an answer to every question, but we can always be ready to give the reason for our hope—see 1 Peter 3:15.

PRAYER TIME

Select one person you could pray about sharing one of your stories with over the next few weeks. Begin praying for that person today, and continue to pray until God answers!

Name: _____

Use your group prayer time to "commission" one another regarding the work God is calling you each to do. Pray for each one to gain clarity, boldness, joy, and opportunity in Great Commission endeavors. Pray that each one will understand how to use their specific gifts to extend the gospel. Pray for each other what Paul asked for in Ephesians 6:19-20.

Lesson #4

A Life Message Speaks the Loudest

It has been said, “A message prepared in a mind reaches minds, but a message prepared in a life reaches and changes lives.” The strongest voices for the gospel in our world today aren’t necessarily the most articulate, but rather, the most authentic. That’s why a life message is so important to fulfilling the mission God has in mind for us. The lifestyle we maintain will either validate or cast doubt on the gospel we share.

CURIOSITY QUESTIONS

Who is one of your favorite historical or public figures to learn about? What about that person is compelling or interesting to you?

Closer to home, who has been one person in your life that you see as an example to follow? What about him or her is worthy of emulation?

MOVING INTO GOD’S WORD

2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-17 – Timothy was one of the most influential first-century Christian leaders, mentored directly by Paul. His life was transformed by the ongoing influence of the Scriptures, of course. But where did his strong faith come from? Why was he so confident in the Bible?

This text also showcases for us the way God uses the Bible to construct our life message. What are the four ways Scripture guides us, and continues us on the path of saying yes to God in the long run? (As you note each way in verse 16, share with the group any examples of how Scripture has played that particular part in your own life.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

Verse 17 assures Timothy that he will be ready for every aspect of his future mission with God because the Scriptures will equip him. How is it that the Bible can prepare us for our own specific mission today, even though it was written long ago?



1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 – We find here that just as Paul, Silas, and Timothy had been positive examples to the church at Thessalonica, in turn this church had become a positive example to the whole world (v. 8). Their life message was traveling quickly! One of the things Life Action celebrates in their events is when God works in someone's life and they share a testimony of that impact with others. The glory should never go to Life Action, or to the church, but to God!

During and since our Life Action event, what stories have we heard of people who have been impacted or changed by the encounter they had with God?

Take a few minutes to share how God touched your life during the days of the Life Action event, and what has changed since then. What positive steps forward can you be celebrating, and what accountability or encouragement would help you continue?

MAKING IT PERSONAL

What is the next step of faith God is asking me to take? What is my next "yes" to the Holy Spirit?

A life message isn't something I can "put on." That's the game the Pharisees were playing (see Matthew 23:25-28). Instead, a life message is born out of my honest repentance and faithful obedience to God's Word. Is there any aspect of my public Christian faith that is not in alignment with what is really happening in my heart? If so, what could I do about it?

PRAYER TIME

If anyone has shared a personal story during this session, take time to pray with them about it and to give thanks for God's grace in that individual's life.

Pray for each other as you consider your next "yes" to God, and as you aim to live authentic, non-hypocritical lives. If there is hypocrisy or compromise lurking in your heart, confess and repent of it during this time.

Consider using Psalm 51:10-13 as an outline for your prayers together.

Lesson #5

Focusing Prayer on Mission

We often turn to prayer in times of great need; and as we learned during the Life Action event, we should also pray fervently for repentance and restoration! But what comes after that? What will define our prayers for the months and years to come?

In addition to simply adoring God and cultivating our personal relationship with Him, an important answer to that question is mission. The closer we get to Christ, the more our souls yearn to see His grand mission completed. So our prayers can begin to reflect His heart to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).

CURIOSITY QUESTIONS

Many people report that although they believe in prayer, they struggle to pray consistently. Why do you think this is?

Have you ever found any method or approach to prayer that really helped you engage with God on a deeper or more consistent level? Can you tell us about that experience?

MOVING INTO GOD'S WORD

Ephesians 6:10-20 – Prayer plays an important role in the spiritual battle we face, and even Paul asked for prayer regarding his mission and the struggles he knew he would face for the gospel. Why do you think verse 18 commands us to be constantly prayerful?

Paul speaks here in military battle terms, clearly elevating our need for spiritual armor and prayer. These are life-and-death issues! How could we as a group more regularly include mission-oriented elements in our prayer times?

Imagine that a group of Christians was as well-armored and fervently praying as this text suggests. What results might we expect to see in their lives and in their circles of influence?

Luke 10:1-3 – Jesus commissioned this group of disciples to go out on mission; and just before He did, He asked them to pray. But rather than praying only about their own mission, they were called on to pray for even more workers to address the great opportunities

in the harvest field. Walk through this text phrase by phrase as a group. What aspects of it surprise you?

What “harvest fields” (different people groups) define your community or neighborhood, that you could begin praying about?

Thinking more globally, there are still many areas of the world that lack access to the gospel, or that need additional “workers” in the fields. Does your group have any personal connection to or burden for one of these areas, that perhaps could become a matter of mission-oriented prayer in the months to come?

MAKING IT PERSONAL

My prayer life over the past year has been: *(circle any that apply)*

Joyful	Formal	Consistent	Hit-and-miss	Passionate
Effective	Deep	Shallow	Non-existent	Hypocritical
Obedient	Authentic	Lax	Mission-oriented	Need-based
Daily	Growing	Relational	Persistent	Reverent

The one word above that I want to define my prayer life in the year ahead is _____.

What would be the best times of day for me to set aside to speak with God? (Even a commitment to pray for 1–2 minutes at a given time every day can be a meaningful start.)

Prayer is often motivated in our hearts when it is tied to the mission we are on earth to accomplish. What are some mission-oriented things I could potentially pray about specifically, so my prayers begin to echo God’s heart of love for the world?

PRAYER TIME

Turn back to Ephesians 6:13-17 and pray for each other regarding each item of armor needed for the spiritual battle. Ask God to give you wisdom regarding the best way to begin praying more consistently.

Lesson #6

The Kingdom-First Life, Forever

Putting our lives into action for Christ is one of the most exciting, adventurous, and fruitful things we can do! During the Life Action event at our church, we were challenged in this regard, first to humble ourselves before God, and then to stand up in bold obedience.

As we have discussed over the past five sessions, a Matthew 6:33, kingdom-first life can be filled with love, prayer, mission, and faith. In this session, we'll look at the final characteristic necessary to put the kingdom of God first in our lives—an *eternal* mindset.

CURIOSITY QUESTIONS

What is one thing you are hoping you'll never forget about what you've learned during the Life Action event and this follow-up study?

How often would you say you think about eternity, or life after death? What usually triggers those thoughts for you?

MOVING INTO GOD'S WORD

Hebrews 11:32-40 – This text calls our attention to the many heroes of faith in the Old Testament era—people who put it all on the line because they believed in God, and because their real sense of destiny wasn't tied to this earth. It is impossible to live a kingdom-first life and maintain earth-first thinking! As you look at the sacrifices many of God's faithful followers have made over the years (like those listed in Hebrews 11), what do you think motivated them to keep going in the hard times?

Verses 10, 16, and 26 of this chapter give us some specific glimpses into the thinking of those who lived by faith. Note the three motivators mentioned:

1.

2.

3.

Colossians 3:1-4 – Paul calls the Colossian church to intentionally change focus, to set their minds on things above rather than on the earthly things. What are some practical ways to set eternity in mind today, when it is so tempting to give our best focus to the here-and-now?



Revelation 21:1-8 – This text calls us to consider the conclusion of the story we are living in now—the day *after* Judgment Day, when all wrongs are made right, when we can celebrate eternal victory in Christ. What emotions come into your heart as you read this text?

What unfinished business do you believe you should pursue before this prophecy leaps out of the pages of the Bible and into living color in front of you?

This text describes the culmination of the kingdom we are called to seek first in Matthew 6:33. If we were to set our sights on this coming day (the most important day in any of our lives!), what types of things might we do differently in our family relationships, careers, or church engagement?

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Hebrews 11 reminds us that faith heroes long ago put everything on the line because they had an eternal mindset. How could I tip my focus more toward eternity on a daily basis?

Over the past year, what “earthly things” have captured too much of my attention? How could I reduce my focus on these, or turn them into reminders to keep living a kingdom-first life?

Today, with eternity in my heart, I’m ready to put my life into action for Christ, and I want to keep this fire burning bright in my soul. Is there someone in my group, or close to my life, who shares this heart commitment, and who I could talk with about these things in the months to come?

Name: _____

PRAYER TIME

Ask God to fill your heart with faith and heavenly perspective, and ask Him for daily help in maintaining your eternal mindset.

Pray for each other, that each member of the group would understand the faith calling God has on his or her life, and for them never to settle for less than the pursuit of God’s eternal purposes.

Pray for your church family, that together as a body you would all keep Matthew 6:33 in your hearts—a *kingdom-first church*.

A man is suspended in the air, hanging from a rope that is attached to a point above him. He is positioned over a body of water, with his arms outstretched and legs slightly bent. The background shows a line of trees and a clear sky. The entire image has a dark blue tint.

LET'S GO ALL IN FOR CHRIST!

If you try to hang
on to your life, you
will lose it. But if
you give up your
life for my sake, you
will save it.

MATTHEW 16:25



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