

Go in peace [5 minutes]

Close your time together by having a volunteer in the group read this quote: *As long as we live in fellowship with our good and beautiful God in his mighty kingdom, we have nothing to fear, not even fear itself. For nothing in life or death can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). When we know this to be true, we can let go of worry and begin living with confidence and joy (p. 182).*

For the Coming week

Read chapter 11, “Learning to Live Without Judging Others.”

The soul-training practice is to go an entire day without gossiping.

The Good and Beautiful LIFE

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Learning to live without worry

WELCOME – Breaking the ice

OPENING TO GOD – Opening to God (5 minutes)

Read *Colossians 3:1-17* together

5 minutes of silence

You may offer a prayer of your own, ring a meditation chime, or simply say “Amen” to end the silence.

Soul training [15 minutes]

If you are in a group of six or more people, divide into groups of three or four. The soul-training exercise for the week was prayer. Regarding the relationship between prayer and worry, the author writes:

God has instituted prayer as one of his means of caring for us. We are invited to turn our cares into prayers. And when we do, we put the matter into God’s hands. This does not take away our responsibility in dealing with our concerns, but it places the concerns in the larger context of the Kingdom. It allows God to use the resources of the kingdom to meet our needs. When we do this, Paul says, we discover a peace that surpasses our understanding (p. 180).

Use the following questions to discuss your experience of prayer.

1. In what ways did you see the Kingdom of God at work in the areas you prayed about?
2. Did you find greater peace as you offered these prayers? If so, how did it affect you?
3. What did you learn about God or yourself from the exercise?

Engaging the Chapter [35 minutes]

The main idea of this chapter is that people who live in the Kingdom of God never need to worry about their lives.

Read through the following questions before you begin your discussion. Note any questions you especially want to discuss. Depending on your group size and the conversation, you may not have time to discuss all of these questions.

1. The author differentiates between worry and caution. Describe the difference (p. 173).
2. In this chapter we explore the relationship between the media and our fears. Reflect for a few minutes on the news media you consume. What fears do they play on? How does the media influence your awareness and openness to God's Kingdom? Discuss these questions with two other people in your group.
3. Review the section entitled "Jesus' Narrative: Things Not to Worry About" (pp. 175-78). As a group reflect on the various points from this section that you find either challenging or helpful.
4. Commentators Dale C. Allison and W. D. Davies note that "anxiety is foolish and accomplishes nothing except to put God out of the picture" (p. 179). Do you agree with this statement? Explain. Why are the kingdom of God and anxiety mutually exclusive?
5. In discussing Matthew 6:34, the author writes, "Jesus says that the kingdom operates only in the present moment. We can only live in the Kingdom today. We can't live in it tomorrow. So worrying about tomorrow is a useless distraction. Just as we count on God today, we can count on him tomorrow. But we aren't in tomorrow, and never will be; we live only in the present, in today" (p. 180). How does this differ from our culture's typical notion regarding tomorrow?

Engaging the word and experiencing transformation [20 minutes]

The author tells us that Matthew 6:33 "is the key to the Sermon on the Mount" (p. 178). Go to the section "One Day at a Time" (pp. 180-81), and highlight points that are especially helpful or challenging to you. Once everyone has had a chance to discuss, prayerfully engage Matthew 6:33 using the following steps.

1. Have each person in turn read Matthew 6:33 aloud, slowly. Leave a brief pause between each reading.
2. Once everyone has read the verse, spend 5 minutes in silence savouring the passage.
3. Read the following: To apply the passage to our lives, write a list of your activities from yesterday on a blank sheet of paper. Allow time for everyone to complete a full list.
4. Then say: Ask yourself this question, "How do I seek first the Kingdom of God in the midst of these activities?" This quote from the chapter may be helpful: "What does it mean to seek the Kingdom of God first? It means making the reality and the principles of God's Kingdom our first and primary concern. ... We continually look to God and what he is doing in the midst of ordinary life" (p. 178).
5. Below your list write ways you can seek first the kingdom of God in the midst of ordinary life.
6. Form groups of three or four and discuss the ideas you have generated so far for seeking first God's Kingdom. Allow the conversation to be creative—perhaps new ideas will surface as you share and discuss.
7. Regroup and have the sub-groups share ideas they created.