



SERMON STUDY GUIDE
For the sermon preached on
11/8/2020:
“Grasp or Give”
Matthew 20:20-28

How to use the Study Guide During Virtual Online Group Meetings

Group life is even more critical during this incredible season. Over and over, group leaders are reporting that suddenly there is a new hunger to connect, share, pray, and meditate on Scripture together, and so we are making these guides available weekly and suggesting a new format during this season.

As you know, our Group Life’s vision is to “practice the way of Jesus.” And while Jesus never had to lead a Torah study over Zoom, he was strategic in his teaching ministry, and we want to be as well.

There are a number of differences between meeting in person and meeting online, ranging from the obvious to the subtle. One is, given our attention spans for online meetings, we want to encourage you to limit the length of your call between 45-60 minutes and we are calling this “Check-In Plus One.” Meaning, spend a few minutes checking in with your group and see if there are any new needs with them (or even amongst their neighbors). The “One” is to spend time in study. As our virtual season continues, our desire for meaningful content and interaction will grow. Given our new format, the study guides based on Sunday’s Sermon will be designed to be more application based (as opposed to unpacking the text with the Inductive Bible Study method). You might consider sharing the passage beforehand with your group in hopes that they might spend more time with the Scripture before the gathering.

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do in practicing the way of Jesus in community.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Tim Ghali and Pastor Rachel Keeler on behalf of the Group Life Team

For the Leader: “Check-In Plus One”

Welcome everyone to the Zoom call and outline the goal of this call being 45 minutes. Spend 15-20 minutes checking in with one another, then move into a time of prayer, and then spend some time discussing the application of the Scripture passage.

A “Check-in” question might be, “How are you doing, and is there anything new that has arisen in your life or in your neighborhood that we can pray about?”

This week, Pastor Adam is leading us in the third and final installment of a mini-series on faith and politics we're calling "Serpents and Doves." This sermon entitled, "Grasp or Give" sampled from a number of texts and this study will focus on the one Adam focused on – Matthew 20:20-28.

We all know that discussing politics is complicated and potentially disruptive to relationships. We have all experienced altered relationships and painful moments throughout the years that have left us wondering where are the safe places that we can share our thoughts and feelings? Healthy small groups that are focused on the "way of Jesus" ought to be one of those places. Before we dive into today, let's set a few boundaries. First, avoid being partisan in your answers. All of the questions below could be answered without revealing your party affiliation. Second, allow the group leader to call a time-out when needed. Third, and most importantly, remember that the objective of this conversation is to strengthen Christ's Kingdom in our hearts and all around us. Let us remember that Christ's Kingdom transcends our current election, and Christ's Kingdom is coming regardless of any earthly leader. Let's spend a few moments preparing our hearts in prayer and then let's read Matthew 20:20-28.

A Mother's Request

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

²¹ "What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

²² "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

²³ Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

²⁴ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:20-28

Q – This scene reveals the natural desire for success, achievement, and placement where the mother of James and John makes a request to Jesus that her sons would have high roles in Jesus' kingdom. In true Jesus style, he responds to the request with a question.

- Spend a little time and interpret Jesus' reply to them (vs. 22-23).
- Had Jesus' Kingdom been an earthly competitor attempting to overthrow the Roman kingdom occupation, describe James' and John's life in that scenario?

(They would have been high cabinet members with new authority, influence, and likely wealth. Likely what they had in mind resembled the Roman kingdom, just with them and their Jewish family and friends in charge with Jesus at the helm. Again, this is not why Jesus came).

- Next, what was Jesus really telling them about the Kingdom he was bringing?

(It was going to look nothing like the Roman Kingdom or any other earthly Kingdom. It was spiritual. And its proclamation was solely focused on empowering people to experience the salvation of God through Jesus, flourishing lives, and enjoying true community).

- (Optional. The heart of this question gets re-asked again later): And third, what does it tell us today when it comes to our understanding of politics and power?

(Similar to what James and John, their mother and all the disciples needed to understand, the politics of Jesus' kingdom is not about earthly power where one group of people controls and even exploits the other. Jesus' kingdom uses spiritual power to bless others).

Q – One of the key points Adam made was “You live under a different King and in a different Kingdom, one in which you expect suffering, one in which you expect sacrifice and one where you are expected to surrender your advantages so that others without those advantages may flourish.” This is a key understanding in the “upside-down” kingdom that Jesus was bringing and that his disciples were having trouble understanding.

- Naturally, we modern-day disciples have trouble with this too as we often feel caught between two kingdoms – Jesus’ rule of life and our present-day national rule of life. What shifts in our thinking, re-posturing of our hearts, and changes in our actions do we need in order to experience more of our true Christian citizenship?

Q – The sermon was titled, “Grasp or Give.” John and James were grasping at a kingdom that Jesus was not building. We need to avoid this crucial mistake at all costs too. Take a moment and consider your relationship to both grasping and giving. Where do you find yourself “grasping” and where do you see that you need to “give” more of.

(Likely, as you unpack the heart of this question, you will see that it's an exercise of faith to release the temporal things we grasp and to give out from Christian hearts of sacrifice, suffering possibly, and loving ultimately.)