

“Difficult Choices”

Upside Down Kingdom- #5

Jesus counters those assumptions with the truth that it is your loving heavenly Father who actually provides all you need. How effective is your anxiety (v. 27)?

Matthew 6:31-34 NLT - 31 "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' 32 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. 34 "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

In contrast to worrying, what should be our priority (v.33)? How would you go about replacing anxiety with seeking God's kingdom?

Wrap Up

In the struggle between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of heaven we will be confronted with difficult choices. We can focus on ourselves and invest our energy in storing up things in this world or we can focus on God and others who he tells us are precious to Him. Our view of the world around us is shaped by which kingdom we have allegiance to. Do our eyes light the way towards life, or are we stumbling in the darkness of the upside-down kingdom? God gives us His assurance that He will give us everything we have need of if we seek His kingdom. And so, we resist anxious thoughts because God is good, and we are His.

Memory Verse

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. - Matthew 6:33 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs. _____

Challenge- Be on guard against anxious thoughts and when they come pause and give God thanks because He is good and He will provide everything we need.

INTRODUCTION

Every day we must make choices. In fact, we have so many things to choose from we probably aren't able to do everything we would like to, and so we have to decide what is really important to us. Sometimes we intentionally make those choices and sometimes we get swept along in the routines of life, investing a significant amount of energy in things that compete with God's priorities. This passage in Matthew 6 essentially asks the question, "Which master are you serving, which kingdom has your allegiance?"

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Consider the last 5 years of your life; what can you say you are glad you put your energy and focus into?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Heaven or Earth

Matthew 6:19-21 NLT - 19 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

Jesus brought the Good News that the kingdom of heaven is near and is advancing against the kingdom of this world. So, when we compare storing earthly treasure versus heavenly treasure it doesn't necessarily mean heavenly treasure is in the future; the kingdom of heaven is now.

Our treasures are things we find valuable and precious.

What does the kingdom of this world tell us is most valuable and precious? What does God consider valuable and precious?

Luke 12:18-21 NLT - 18 Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. 19 And I'll sit back and say to myself, "My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!"' 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?' 21 "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

In Luke we find the parable of the rich fool. It demonstrates the worst-case scenario of someone who stores up riches on earth. *In focusing on storing up earthly treasures what had the rich fool neglected? What is involved in storing up earthly treasures that steals away our focus from God?*

Jesus points out the relationship between our treasures and our hearts (Matt 6:21).

What is God's priority for our heart?

Matthew 22:37 NLT - 37 Jesus replied, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind."

There's a battle going on for your desire and affections. The upside-down kingdom does not go quietly.

2. Eye Spy

Matthew 6:22-23 NLT - 22 "Your eye is a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light. 23 But when your eye is bad, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!"

Jesus uses a different illustration here to make the same point- which kingdom is directing you; the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light? Often the things that catch our eye are a reflection of our thoughts which, in turn, reflect what we are focused on.

Are you the kind of person who notices lots of details around you or do you find a lot of things get by you without being noticed? Has God ever drawn your attention to something or someone so that He can use you in some way?

Our eyes have a way of getting us into trouble if we let them. David had experienced that with Bathsheba, but in Psalm 101 he resolved to live differently.

Psalm 101:2-3 NLT - 2 I will be careful to live a blameless life-- when will you come to help me? I will lead a life of integrity in my own home. 3 I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar. I hate all who deal crookedly; I will have nothing to do with them.

In the kingdom of this world there is no shortage of vile and vulgar sights.

What does Mat 18:9 tell us the eye has potential to do if we let it?

Matthew 18:9 NLT - 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It's better to enter eternal life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

We have a better choice to fix our eyes on and a much better result.

Hebrews 12:1-2 NLT - 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

What does Hebrews 12:1-2 tell us we gain by keeping our eyes on Jesus?

3. Worry Monster

Matthew 6:24-27 NLT - 24 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. 25 "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life--whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? 27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?"

Worry and anxiety can be another symptom of the kingdom of this world vying for your thoughts. In verse 24 Jesus likens this battle to serving two masters.

What is the cause for anxiety in this passage? What assumptions underlie such anxieties?