

- **Main Passage:** Matthew 25:31-46
- **Purpose:** To see that our influence is supposed to be surrendered to the Lord to be used by Him to spread the Gospel.
- **Session Snapshot:** The purpose of our influence has to be Gospel-centered. And we cannot hold anything back. We have to pray, earnestly, to be used by God to advance His Kingdom. We are God's laborers! His desire is to use us to spread His Word.

## GETTING STARTED

*Kick-off your time together by reviewing what you did in the last session.*

FIRST, explain to your group that they will be continuing the video series on influence that is part of a larger study on what it means to pursue a masculinity that is centered in Christ. Remind them of what was covered in the previous session on influence. This week we transition to how we use our influence as a means of sharing the Gospel.

Ask for volunteers to share what they are getting out of their time in this study.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

## DIGGING IN

*Jump into the session by watching this week's video.*

THEN, play the video. (You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.) Encourage men to take notes as they watch the video.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Where would you find yourself on the spectrum of the survey Rick talked about? Do you believe sharing your faith is important? How do your actions back up your response?**
- **Have you ever considered the concept of being a good steward of your influence? How are you doing in the stewardship of the influence God has given you?**
- **Can you remember a time God called you to share your faith with someone? Describe the interaction.**
- **Is your "yes" on the table for God? If so, do you sense a leading from God? Do you sense where God is leading you next?**
- **If your answer is no, what is keeping you from surrendering your life and your influence to God?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **If we're serious about being the men God has called us to be, we have to fully understand that our influence is to be given over to God to be used by Him to lead people to know Him. There is no other way to view our influence. Let's take a deeper look into where we see this in Scripture.**

## OPENING THE WORD

*Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.*

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at Matthew 25:31-46. Before reading the passage, make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel having been written in the late A.D. 50s or 60s, though some think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his Gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THEN, when you finish, lead men in the following discussion:

- **Just so we're on the same page, what event is Jesus describing here?**
  - Answer: The future final judgment of all humankind after His second coming.
- **Who are the "sheep," and who are the "goats"?**
  - Answer: The sheep are Christ's followers who will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. The goats are those who did not follow Christ and will not enter.
- **Let's make a list of the things that Jesus said His sheep did for Him. What do you see in these verses?**
  - Answer: They gave food when He was hungry, gave drink when He was thirsty, welcomed Him when He was a stranger, clothed Him when He was naked, visited Him when He was sick, and in prison.
- **What confusion do the sheep express over these statements?**
  - Answer: They do not remember doing these things for Jesus.
- **How did Jesus respond to their confusion?**
  - Answer: By telling them what they did for the needy was actually for Him and to Him.
- **Have you ever thought about serving other people as serving God directly? In what ways?**
  - Answers will vary. Allow for discussion.
- **How might that change your view toward using your influence to impact those around you? Would you focus less on whether or not they deserved your help?**
  - Allow for discussion but point out that there is no clause for helping those that we deem worthy. We are not commanded to judge or sort out the needy, only to meet the need.

Explain that when we hear Jesus' heart in this passage, we are forced to realize that not using our influence to impact others is the same as rejecting Jesus. To neglect others is to live in disobedience. Ask something like:

- **When Jesus speaks of "the least of these my brothers," there are two possible groups that He is referencing. Just like the sheep and goats, He has sorted in the judgment room, the least of these can refer to believers and unbelievers. How does meeting the needs of unbelievers serve Jesus and further His Kingdom?**
  - Answer: Meeting the physical or immediate needs of those who do not know Him provides an opportunity for us to show what His love looks like. When we meet the needs of those separated from God, we have an opportunity to say, "God sees you, and He cares." This can often open the door for the Gospel to be shared.
- **How does meeting the needs of fellow believers serve Jesus and further His Kingdom?**
  - Answer: It multiplies the effectiveness of God's people. Throughout Scripture, we see the gratitude of the disciples and apostles as people met their needs and enabled them to carry out the

work of ministry. Jesus instructs His people to be a family and carry each other's burdens.

THEN, remind men that Jesus explained this in a previous teaching. Turn to Matthew 10:40-42 and read it together. Summarize by saying/asking:

- **Jesus is speaking about His followers here. How does this passage address how we use our influence to impact others who may be different from us?**
  - Answers may vary, but point out that many needs go unmet in churches that take an every-man-for-himself attitude. How we care for one another in the family of God is how we reflect our relationship to Christ.

FINALLY, explain that this passage makes it clear that even a small amount of influence makes you a participant in God's greater work. Say:

- **We cannot be tempted to think that we can't make a difference. This is just an excuse not to try. Jesus says that even our small acts of influence can have a larger impact. What we do matters! What we don't do has consequences.**

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

## ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

*Focus your group's attention on one key takeaway from your time together.*

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on one main takeaway from this session. Lead men to consider one or more of the following questions to help focus their application of these principles.

1. What tendencies do you have to turn away from using our influence to make a difference in the lives of others? What can you do to begin to decrease these tendencies in your life?
2. Who in your life (be specific) is in a prime position to be deeply impacted by an act of kindness by you? Be intentional about using your influence to make a difference in this person's life. Follow through and make sure you connect your act of kindness to your obedience to God.
3. Are you leading others in your life to use their influence like God is calling you to use yours? If so, give some examples so you can encourage others to follow suit. If not, what are the barriers keeping you from doing so, and what can you do to remove them?

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to prayerfully listen to what God is trying to tell them personally regarding their call to go and make disciples, and to respond obediently. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.