



STUDY CIRCLE GUIDE

SEEKING FIRST THE KINGDOM:

30 Meditations on How to Love God with
All Your Heart, Mind, Soul, and Strength

Prepared by Fr. John Bartunek, LC, S.Th.D.
RCSpirituality.org

Produced by Coronation
coronationmedia.com

OVERVIEW

SEEKING FIRST THE KINGDOM

SUMMARY

This Study Circle Guide is only a pointer to a ready-to-go resource perfect for a practical, in-depth study about Christian formation: *Seeking First the Kingdom: 30 Meditations on How to Love God with All Your Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength*. This book was designed from the beginning to be useful for individuals, small groups, and even classrooms. It provides sufficient structure for effective small-group meetings, but avoids an overabundance of stifling material.

It focuses on understanding the Great Commandment in terms of integral Christian formation: *how to integrate into one's friendship with Christ every dimension of the human person—desires, emotions, intellect, and will*.

The book unfolds what is meant by each term in Christ's Great Commandment. It does so in 30 short chapter, utilizing quotations from St. John Paul II, clear and practical explanations of traditional Catholic spirituality, and ample Scripture quotations.

CATEGORIES OF INTEREST

Catholic Doctrine; Bible; Prayer and Spiritual Growth; General

RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF SESSIONS

The easiest and most logical way to use this resource for group study is to have one session for each chapter (there are 30 chapters in all). But the book is divided into six parts, so it could also be used in a more intense way as a six-session study.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- At least one copy of the book, *Seeking First the Kingdom*. Ideally, each participant would have a personal copy. But the relevant sections for each session could also simply be photocopied and distributed.

- OPTIONAL: At least one copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This book contains an appendix in which relevant articles from the Catechism are referenced for each chapter. Reading these together can add a lot to the discussion and study. It may be a good idea for one participant (or for the moderator) to read all the references before the meeting, so as to be able to identify the one or two that would most stimulate the group discussion.
- OPTIONAL: If you have never moderated a small-group study, we recommend that you read “The Better Part Group Study Guide” published at www.SpiritualDirection.com and available there as a free download. This is a leader’s guide that explains how to use *The Better Part* in a group discussion setting. This Guide is short and provides extremely helpful hints for any small group activity.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Anyone who is already a convinced (though not necessarily well-formed or mature) Catholic. The book makes use of but makes no attempt to explain basic Catholic assumptions (e.g., the divinity of Christ, the infallibility of the Magisterium, the Real Presence in the Eucharist...). Some of the material may be familiar to people who are advanced in the spiritual life, but even for them, because of the ample Scriptural references and practical challenges at the end of each chapter, it can be a fruitful review.

The approach in general, and the questions for reflection and discussion at the end of each chapter, reflect the Christ-centered and apostolic nature of the spirituality proper to the ecclesial movement Regnum Christi, along with its valued principle of integral formation. Nevertheless, explicit or exclusive references to the Regnum Christi vocation are not included.

This resource is also useful as a tool for evangelization. It makes it easy to start a faith-sharing group for Catholics who are feeling nudged by the Holy Spirit to take greater ownership for their spiritual growth.



HOW MUCH HOMEWORK?

The only required homework would be for everyone to read the 5-page introduction to the book. That will orient everyone and align expectations. From then on, the resource is entirely self-contained and necessitates no homework. Each chapter consists of a quotation from St. John Paul II, a 2-3 page explanation of a spiritual principle, questions for reflection and group discussion (including concrete suggestions for applications), and a closing prayer (from a saint, from tradition, from the liturgy, or from the RC or LC prayer books).

Ideally, at least the moderator would preview the chapter being studied (and the Catechism references for the chapter contained in the appendix) and prepare beforehand their own answers to the questions. But even this is not strictly necessary.

[For a group that wanted to study the book in six sessions instead of 30 sessions, more homework would be necessary. Each participant would have to read the relevant chapters prior to their meeting, and the moderator would have to decide how to guide the discussion (maybe presenting a summary of the chapters in that part of the book, then opening the floor for questions and commentary).]

The structure of a study session using this resource could be this simple (although individual groups could adjust it as they see fit):

- I. Opening prayer
 - II. Reading aloud the chapter—a volunteer could read it all, or each participant could read a paragraph.
 - III. Discussing the passage and the commentary, either using the questions for reflection and discussion, or simply diving in according to the spontaneous reaction of the participants.
 - IV. Conclusion
 - It is a good idea to vocalize at the end the major discoveries or insights that the discussion brought about.
 - It can also be a good idea to finish by vocalizing some personal commitments that can help the participants inject into their daily lives the wisdom they discovered in the passage. These commitments can be reviewed at the beginning of the next session.
 - Concluding prayer.

NOTES

