

1

A STRANGE CHOICE

Life is so busy. We are busy at work. We are busy at home. We are busy with our family activities. We are busy at church. As a result, most of us feel overstretched when it comes to our time, relationships, and finances. We're trying to keep up with a culture that is running on overdrive all the time.

It's no wonder most of us feel stressed and behind, and words like "joy," "rest," and "peace" sound so foreign.

We don't have to live this way. Many times, we feel like we don't have any choice but to live at or above our limits. However, we can choose to live differently. We can decide to have margin in our lives—where we intentionally leave space for things that matter most, for relationships to develop, for money to be left over at the end of the month, and for opportunities to recharge and rest.

This choice is a strange one. Although most of us don't live this way today, margin is a Jesus-like choice. Over the course of the next six weeks, we will look at what this choice looks like and how it has the promise to change the whole trajectory of our lives.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Mark 1:35



“We can decide to have margin in our lives—where we intentionally leave space for things that matter most, for relationships to develop, for money to be left over at the end of the month, and for opportunities to recharge and rest.”

LEADER NOTES



- If your group is new, welcome newcomers. Introduce everyone. You may want to have name tags for this first meeting.
- Open your group with a brief prayer asking God for insight as you study. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during discussion.
- Before you start this first meeting, get contact information for every participant. Take time to pass around a copy of the Small Group Roster on page 119 or a blank sheet of paper. Ask someone to make copies or type up a list with everyone's information and email it to the group during the week.
- Whether your group is new or ongoing, it's always important to review your values. On page 112 is a Small Group Agreement with important values for sustaining healthy, balanced groups. Choose one or two of these values—ones you haven't previously focused on or those you have room to grow in—to emphasize during this study.
- The Small Group Calendar on page 113 is a tool for planning who will host and lead each meeting. Consider rotating hosts and leaders, and take a few minutes to plan future meetings.



HEAR GOD'S STORY

106



READ MARK 1:35-39

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

THINK ABOUT IT

- What steps did Jesus take in order to find unhurried time? Make some observations together.
- Is it easy or hard for you to find unhurried time in your day? If you can find it, where or what time of the day does it tend to happen?
- Why did the disciples decide to interrupt Jesus? Put yourself in their shoes—what do you think they expected Jesus to do when they said, "Everyone is looking for you!"?
- Why do you think Jesus responded the way He did? What does it tell you about how He ordered His time, energy, and life?



STUDY NOTES

It is interesting to think that Simon and the other disciples probably would have been happy to stay in Capernaum and observe Jesus teaching and healing the sick every day in the synagogue. Simon almost accusingly said, “*Everyone is looking for you!*” In other words, the disciples were saying, “How could you be so insensitive? Don’t you know that the people are looking for you and they have needs?” Jesus’ response must have surprised them. He decided to move on to a new location. He knew He wasn’t here to meet every need but to extend the Good News further. So they left, even though there were many needs unmet. Jesus knew that He couldn’t do it all, and He wasn’t going to try. He chose to live well within His limited time.

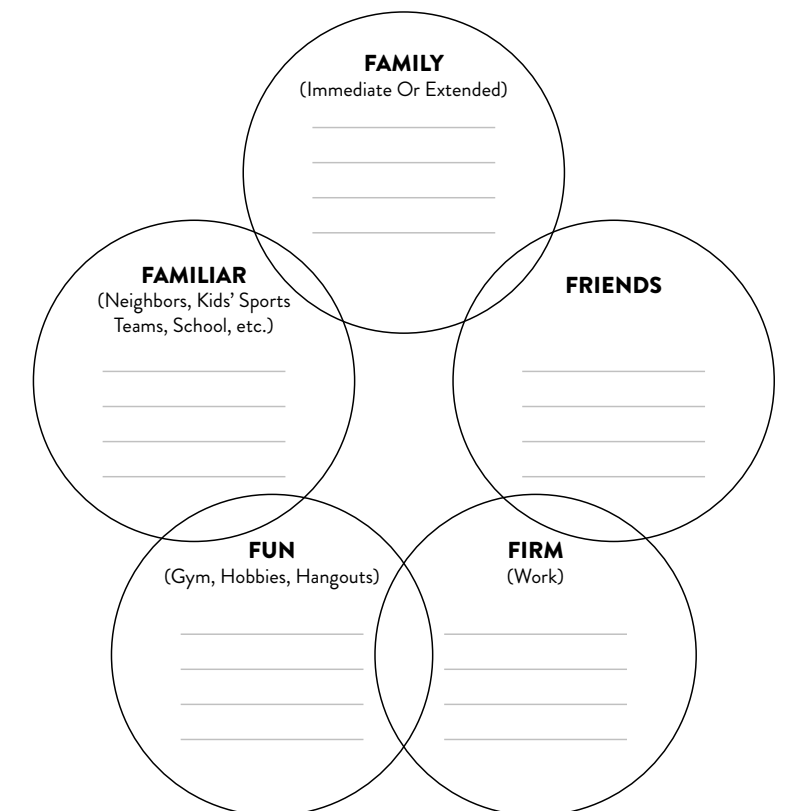




CREATE A NEW STORY

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you've learned.

- If we know living overworked lives is not great, why do so many of us live this way?
- If you could gain margin in one area of your life (i.e., an extra hour of unhurried time somewhere, an extra amount of money somewhere in your budget, an extra amount of energy in one relationship), where would it be and why?
- What obstacles do you face in creating more margin in your life?
- What is one thing you could do to choose to live with margin somewhere?
- Sometimes, in the middle of the hustle and bustle of life, it's easy to forget something important: the people God has placed all around us. God loves them, and He has placed them in our lives for a reason—to reflect His love to them. So as we slow down our lives a bit during this Margin series, let's think about the people who surround us.
- Take a look at the Circles of Life diagram and write the names of two or three people you know who maybe don't know Jesus. Commit to praying for God's guidance and an opportunity to connect with each of them. Would they be open to joining the group? Share your lists with the group so you can all be praying for the people you've identified.
- This week, how will you interact with the Bible? Can you commit to spending time in the Daily Devotions? Tell the group how you plan to follow Jesus this week, and then, talk about your progress and challenges.
- Give each person an opportunity to share prayer requests.
- If you'd like, you can write these on the Prayer & Praise Report on page 119.
- Close your meeting with prayer.



FOR **ADDITIONAL STUDY**



Take some time between now and your next meeting to dig into God's Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own. Jot down your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. You may want to use a Bible website or app to look up commentary on these passages. If you would like, share what you learn with the group during the next meeting.

READ MATTHEW 6:33

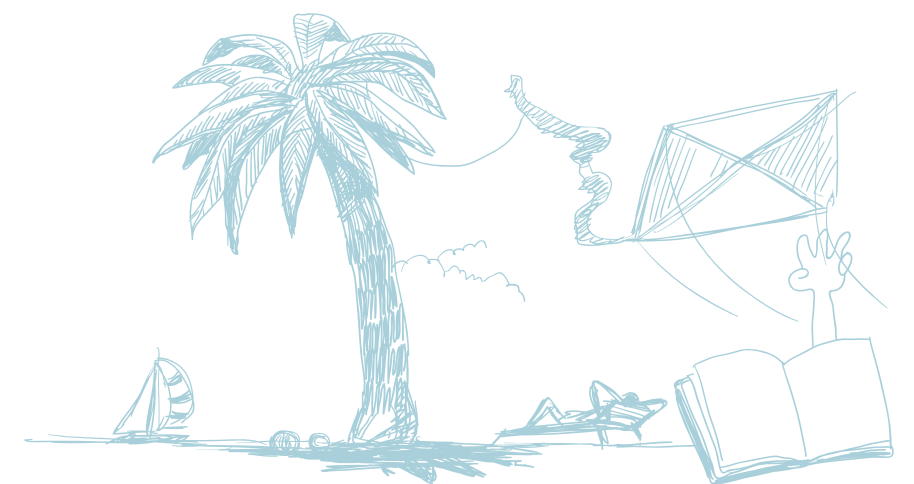
But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

- What does it mean to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness"?
- How do you know if you are truly seeking the kingdom first?
- Do you trust that God will take care of your needs?

READ MATTHEW 6:19-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- How do these verses relate to our study?
- What are earthly treasures that you worry about?
- How can you store up treasures in Heaven?



DAILY DEVOTIONS

DAY

1

MATTHEW 11:28

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

REFLECT

When life gets busy, we often forget to recharge by spending time with God, who wants to give us rest and refreshment. What would it look like to rest in Jesus today?

DAY

2

MATTHEW 14:23

After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone.

REFLECT

Don't feel guilty about carving out time for yourself. Jesus did it, and so can you.

DAY

3

PSALM 127:2

In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.

REFLECT

God wants you to be healthy in every aspect of your life, even your sleep. Are you taking care of your physical needs?

DAY

4

PSALM 1:3

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

REFLECT

Can you identify with this verse? Why or why not?

DAY

5

2 CORINTHIANS 5:9

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

REFLECT

In a practical way, how can you worship God wherever you are?

DAY

6

REFLECT

Use the following space to reflect on what you learned this week and what God is saying to you.