



Leader's Guide – Eliminating the Competition

Matthew 13:7–9, 22–23 | Pastor Dave Bennett | April 26, 2026

Session Overview

This session helps participants evaluate what is growing alongside their faith. Using Jesus' parable of the thorny soil, the group will explore how good soil can still become unfruitful when competing growth is left unchecked. Participants will identify distractions, misplaced priorities, and hidden strongholds—and take intentional steps toward cultivating a life where the Word can thrive.

Session Flow (60–75 minutes)

1. Welcome and Icebreaker (10 min)

Think about something in your life that started out healthy or helpful—but over time became a distraction or even a problem. What changed?

Purpose:

To help participants recognize how competing growth develops subtly and begin identifying what may be crowding out their spiritual growth.

2. Scripture Reading (5 min)

Read Matthew 13:7–9, 22–23 aloud.

3. Discussion (40–50 min)

Leader Coaching Sidebar: Eliminating the Competition

- Help participants identify subtle distractions.
- Focus on heart condition, not just behavior.
- Encourage honesty and vulnerability.
- Move toward clear application.

1. Why is it dangerous that the thorny soil looks healthy at first? What does that reveal about how spiritual drift happens?

Leader Note: Help distinguish between appearance of growth and actual fruitfulness.

2. What are some examples of “good things” that can slowly compete with God in your life?

Leader Note: Push for specific, real-life examples.

3. Jesus says worries and wealth choke the Word. Which feels most real right now?

Leader Note: Help participants connect personally.

4. Why does the enemy often work through distraction instead of direct opposition?

Leader Note: Highlight subtlety of spiritual attack.

5. What does it look like for something to sit in authority next to Jesus?

Leader Note: Explore misplaced priorities.

6. How can you tell when something shifts from blessing to idol?

Leader Note: Encourage self-awareness.

7. What role does busyness play in choking spiritual growth?

Leader Note: Identify everyday patterns.

8. Why is discernment difficult in today’s world?

Leader Note: Expose pace and noise issues.

9. What pattern might be allowing thorns to grow unchecked?

Leader Note: Move toward honesty.

10. What is one step you can take this week to remove competition?

Leader Note: End with action.

4. Application and Prayer (10–15 min)

Invite each participant to identify one area competing with their faith. Ask: What is one step you can take this week to remove or reduce that?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

Lord, thank You for planting Your truth in our lives. Help us recognize what is competing with You. Give us courage to remove distractions, wisdom to discern what matters most, and strength to live fully for You. Amen.