

KINGDOM FIRST - STUDY GUIDE

SESSION ONE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Kingdom First study. Our hope and prayer is that this short study will give you new ways of looking at what the kingdom of God is like, and perhaps whet your appetite for learning more about how you can become an expression of the kingdom of God, here and now.

Before we launch into the first video teaching by Philip Zimmermann, let's spend a few minutes with these discussion and reflection questions.

DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Think about how you would define the Kingdom of God in your own words, then summarize it below.

2. If you could use one analogy or word picture to explain the kingdom of God, what would you use?

“Indeed, the social and political realm, along with the individual heart, is the only place in all creation where the kingdom of God, or his effective will, is currently permitted to be absent... So when Jesus directs us to pray, “Thy kingdom come,”

he does not mean we should pray for it to come into existence.

Rather, we pray for it to take over at all points in the personal, social, and political order where it is now excluded:

“On earth as it is in heaven.”

DALLAS WILLARD, THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY

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VIDEO: SESSION ONE

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all he has and buys that field.”

MATTHEW 13:44

The kingdom of God is like the _____ of God.

The kingdom of God is like a _____ .

“When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors... But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed.”

LUKE 14:12-14

The kingdom of God is like a life of _____ .

“The Bible doesn’t preach prosperity in our narrow, 21st-century understanding of the word. But what it does teach is the shalom of God. Something that is far richer, deeper and broader than the temporary and shallow happiness that economic prosperity gives people. Shalom, a word that appears over 250 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, is a vision of what life is like when lived in line with God’s agenda. Shalom is about comprehensive well-being and flourishing at every level of life - socially, economically, spiritually and politically. It incorporates contentment, health, justice, liberation, fulfillment, freedom and hope.

STEVE CHALK, THE LOST MESSAGE OF JESUS

Peace with God, peace with your neighbor,
peace with yourself, and peace with creation.

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DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are some things that God wants to have happen in his kingdom? Why does it seem like the things that God wants to have happen aren't always happening?

2. If the kingdom of God is truly like the Rule of God, where what God wants to have happen, actually happens, what observations can we make about the kingdom of God among us?

3. Why is it significant that the first miracle of Jesus was turning water into wine?

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DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

4. How does it make you feel to think the kingdom of God is like a party?

5. Philip mentioned that a life of shalom is a life at peace with God, with your neighbor, with yourself, and with creation. Which of these are you most at peace with? Which are you least at peace with?

6. Where would you like more shalom in your life?

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INTRODUCTION

In week one we talked about three different pictures of the kingdom of God: the kingdom of God is like the rule of God, the kingdom of God is like a party, and the kingdom of God is like a life of shalom.

We hope that you are opening your heart to the message of the kingdom of God. As Philip says, it can mess you up in a good way.

In this week's session, we will be taking a look at three more pictures of the kingdom of God.

VIDEO: SESSION TWO

The kingdom of God is like the _____ of God.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.”

“Pay close attention now: I’m creating new heavens and a new earth.
All the earlier troubles, chaos, and pain are things of the past, to be forgotten.
Look ahead with joy. Anticipate what I’m creating:
No more sounds of weeping in the city, no cries of anguish;
No more babies dying in the cradle, or old people who don’t enjoy a full lifetime;
One-hundredth birthdays will be considered normal— anything less will seem like a cheat.
They’ll build houses and move in. They’ll plant fields and eat what they grow.
No more building a house that some outsider takes over,
they won’t work and have nothing come of it,
they won’t have children snatched out from under them.
Wolf and lamb will graze the same meadow, lion and ox eat straw from the same trough,
Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill anywhere on my Holy Mountain,” says God.“

ISAIAH 65, THE MESSAGE

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The kingdom of God is like _____ on Earth.

“They were not thinking about how to secure themselves a place in heaven after they died. The phrase “kingdom of heaven,” which we find frequently in Matthew’s Gospel where the others have “kingdom of God,” does not refer to a place, called “heaven, where God’s people will go after death. It refers to the rule of heaven, that is, of God, being brought to bear in the present world. Thy kingdom come, said Jesus, thy will be done, on earth as in heaven. Jesus’ contemporaries knew that the creator God intended to bring justice and peace to his world here and now.”

N. T. WRIGHT, THE CHALLENGE OF JESUS

“A little faith will take you to heaven,
but I pray for the kind of faith that will bring heaven to earth!”

CHARLES SPURGEON, 18TH CENTURY PREACHER

**We want to see how heaven breaks
into our lives, our city, and our world.**

The kingdom of God is like _____ .

“We are Easter Sunday people living on Good Friday.”

N. T. WRIGHT, NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLAR

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DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How would you summarize the dream of God?

2. What are some of God's nightmares that you have experienced in your life, family, or community?

3. How much of your focus has been on you getting to heaven rather than heaven coming to earth?

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DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

4. Read the following quote by G. K. Chesterton and then discuss this question: How does Easter play into the idea of the kingdom of God?

“On the third day (Easter Sunday) the friends of Christ coming at daybreak to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In varying ways they realized the new wonder; but even they hardly realized that the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in a semblance of the gardener God walked again in the garden, in the cool not of the evening but the dawn.”

G. K. CHESTERTON, THE EVERLASTING MAN

5. How would you describe the life that God wants for us on this side of eternity?

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We have talked about six pictures of the kingdom of God so far. In this week's lesson we will talk about two more pictures, and then discuss the mandate we have of living out the kingdom message.

We hope that you realize more and more what a beautiful and life-changing message the message of the kingdom is.

VIDEO: SESSION THREE

The kingdom of God is like _____.

“Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’”

LUKE 4:17-21

The kingdom of God is like a _____ for life.

The means of the kingdom is always love.
Nothing more and nothing less.

We are called to be a _____.

We are called to be a _____ of what is to come.

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DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do Christians have a mandate to take care of creation? Why?

2. Read the passage below, and then discuss the following: What do you think Jesus meant when he said that “you are not far from the kingdom of God.”

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

MARK 12:28-34

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DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

3. In what practical ways can you personally be a trailer for the kingdom?

4. In what ways can the Church be a trailer for the kingdom?

5. What is your biggest takeaway from the Kingdom First series?

6. In which ways are you challenged to change your life because of the message of the kingdom of God?

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GOING DEEPER

We would encourage you to spend time in prayer, meditating and reflecting on what it means to be kingdom people; people who offer a preview of how eternity will look, people who live in a way that is a foretaste of what is to come.

As you spend time in prayer, we would like to suggest that you consider using the prayer attributed to St Francis of Assisi as a framework upon which to continue to build your understanding of living out the mandate of the kingdom. As you pray this prayer, give the Holy Spirit space to bring to light different facets of kingdom living; confessing those areas in which you may fall short, and opening your heart to repentance, restoration, and renewal, ultimately moving into action for the sake of the kingdom.

PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.