

Kingdom of God Video Series -- Leader's Guide

This series offers an ancient, misinterpreted paradigm so you can expect some to struggle to understand it. Here are some tips to help you prepare for making sure the essential concepts in each session is focused on so the disciple will leave with a healthy understanding of the kingdom of God.

Preparation: Key to communicating to your group

- Because this will be a serious paradigm shift, **before your first session, be sure to preview all the videos, read the Leaders Manual and the scriptures and questions on the handout relating to each session** and make sure you understand all the concepts taught in series **before** your 1st session. [Ex. In Session 1, make sure you understand why the teaching on the kingdom of God is vital to a person's understanding of God, Christianity and their personal life.] If you don't understand something, it is very important that you call Pastor Wine or Pastor Roger and discuss it with them until it is clear in your mind.
- Please stay current by viewing each video and review the questions for each session you plan to use that day. This will improve your ability to be clear in both leading the session as well as answering the questions that will be raised.
 - Your understanding of the concept is vital in order for you to discern which points your members are unclear about and therefore, you must take more time to discuss.
 - Be reasonably confident that at least most of your group understands the fundamentals of the truth before you move to the next session. Plan to spend private time with the individual who aren't grasping the truth to help them do so in order to not hold the rest of the group from moving forward.

God's empowerment is essential

- Pray at least 10 minutes that the Holy Spirit will empower the group to hear His whisper and grasp the concepts being taught.

Truth is based on the Bible not man's opinions

- Before you begin the first assigned question, it may be wise to review any key scriptures referred to in the video that might reinforce important concepts. [Ex. In Session 1, perhaps have them reread those that focus on how important the kingdom of God was to Jesus.]
- The purpose of this is to make sure they see the truths being taught are in the Bible and not just a theory being taught by Pastor Wine.

The Tools

Handouts have been provided to assist everyone process each component serving a unique purpose.

1. A “go around” question is designed for the sole purpose of unifying the group’s thoughts on one thought that prepares them to more easily comprehend the session that follows. Not every person needs to share their response.
2. The purpose for listing the scriptures is to help the viewer read the actual verse that may only be mentioned in passing on the video, and to provide them a basis for looking more closely at a Bible verse mentioned.
3. The bullet point is provided so the key thoughts in each session will stand out to everyone in the discussion time.
4. The Discovery questions are intended to force the participants to process the concepts so it will be more easily understood and retained. This is important because each video builds on the concepts that have previously been taught. Of these questions, not all are created equal so try to identify those that best bring out the primary points and spend the most time on them. If you understand the purpose for the question, you can restate the question so the group can better understand and discussion of the inherent concept.
Avoid lingering on one question once the group grasps the point of the question. And, please don’t allow someone to lead you or your group off on a “bunny trail” that is not relevant to the focus of the material. The concepts related to this material will require dedicated concentration in order for the participant to understand and value it enough for it to shape their life.
5. The Application questions hold a great value since they are intended to help each individual to integrate the primary concepts into their daily life as much as possible. Use them as often as you can when you have time after the Discovery questions and conclude them with prayer.

Meeting Format

You will notice each option below will take virtually 1 ½ hours. You will find some videos will generate more conversation than others which could affect how much time you will want to allow for discussion and prayer. You may choose whether you want to show and discuss one or two videos per night. Beyond that, your decision will depend upon 2 significant factors: 1) how much time you want for your group to build relationships, how you want the group to handle prayer requests, or other unique discussions or activities; or, upon 2) how thorough you want those in your group to understand this concept so they will be able to integrate it into their daily lives.

One video per night

Welcome and Settle In: 10 min
 Go-around Question: 5 min
 Video: (length of each vary slightly) 10 min
 Scripture Review: 10 min
 Discovery Discussion: 20 min
 Application: 10 min
 Prayer: 20 min

Two videos per night

Welcome and Settle In: 5 min
 Go-around Question: 2 min
 Video: (length of each vary slightly) 10 min
 Scripture Review: 3 min
 Discovery Discussion: 15
 Application: 5 min
 Prayer: 5 min

Notes to emphasize on each session

Some of the following notes offer additional explanatory insights to provide you as the leader with additional insights to what is mentioned in the video, or questions, so that you will be better prepared when attempting to guide the participants or in answering their questions.

SESSION 1 [Introduction to the Kingdom of God]

Purpose of the Session: Introduce the importance of the kingdom of God

Preface this video by provoking thought in them to look for what the teaching will reveal to them about God's character, values and ways.

Key Points to help them understand:

- This session should offer fresh insight on God's authority, the value He places on Jesus' message and how we must fully submit to Him in order to enjoy fullness of life.
- The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are used interchangeably.
- The truth of the kingdom of God is vitally important to a believer because it is the very core of the entire Bible (i.e. the Garden of Eden to His ruling through His reigning in Revelation). Jesus began and ended His earthly ministry teaching about it. And He said this message would be preached in the whole world before the end would come.
- **This is very important:** Since grace and mercy are only implied in the video, therefore you need to make sure that those you are working with understanding that Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God only make God's grace and mercy practical and meaningful to a person. The concept of the kingdom of God does NOT take away from these fundamental Christian virtues.

Grace and mercy means nothing unless a person is painfully aware that he's incapable of having something he desperately needs for survival and humbles himself enough to asks for it. (James 4:2b) So long as a person allows him/herself to feel they can keep God's laws by their own efforts, His grace and mercy are only religious terms we intellectually accept. The most skilled surgeon is of absolutely no real value to a patient who refuses to accept the fact he will die unless that surgeon does surgery on him. God's pure laws, in blatant contrast to our total inescapable depravity, make a person keenly aware that He desperately needs God's grace and mercy or he/she will spend eternity in hell. Grace is the power to do what God is asking of me.

SESSION 2 [What is the Kingdom of God?]

Purpose of the Session: Define the kingdom of God

Key Points to help them understand:

- The kingdom of God is all about the authority factor—who is king of your life.
- The kingdom of God is not a place, but a governmental environment or a condition where every person or thing is in submission to His sovereign rule.
- **It is vital for them to understand** God is a **benevolent dictator!** Contrary to common fears about such authority, submitting to Him and His rule has most desirable results.
- (Cf. Question #1) Since God is beyond our full understanding, authentic Christianity cannot be motivated only by perfectly correct theology. While the kingdom of God is all about the authority factor, yet our king is not looking for mere robotic obedience, but rather obedience motivated by the passionate heart's desire to love and obey the king.
- The important question is not only, "Have you heard the gospel, believed, received it and been saved?", but "HAS THE GOSPEL BROUGHT YOU UNDER THE RULE OF THE KING? Has your heart said to God 'Thy will be done?'"

SESSION 3 [Where is the Kingdom of God?]

Purpose of the Session: Explain the location of the kingdom of God

Key Points to help them understand:

- God wants His kingdom to reign within each person, not just among them.
- **Colossians 1:25-27 places great value on this mystery that Christ is within us. When God's Spirit is within a person He not only will write His laws on our heart (Rom. 2:13) and motivate us to do God's will (Phil. 2:13), but He will also transform us into His image (2 Cor. 3:11). Galatians 2:20 ESV "I have been crucified with Christ. It is**

no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

- When a person actually accepts God’s authority over them, it will change their attitude and how they live their life. They will see themselves as a servant and more willing to deny themselves daily to follow Christ the King. And everything they do will be done in service to Him, not just a human who may be their immediate authority. But it will be progressive in nature, not complete when a person initially surrenders although that is their intent at the time.
- A Christ follower actually is not their own boss since they don’t own themselves.

SESSION 4 [How to Enter the Kingdom of God]

Purpose of the Session: Explain how a person enters God’s kingdom

Key Points to help them understand:

- The outward evidence in a person’s behavior that confirms they are in God’s kingdom is the gift of the Holy Spirit (Ez. 36:27, Acts 2:36) who will always point (motivate) a person to love, serve and obey Christ and God the Father. This results in wanting to obey God’s laws and ways in one’s daily life, the most clear evidence that a person has been regenerated. Philippians 2:13 NLT *“For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.”*
- 1 Corinthians 2:14 explains the natural mind is incapable of understanding the more significant truth of the kingdom of God. Only the Holy Spirit can make these truths genuinely come alive to a person.
- One can only enter His kingdom by an authentic submission to the King (in Acts 3:19 the words “repent—change the way you think”, “be converted”, and “that” are different words that state ‘submitting to the king’s rule in contrast to our own rule’,— this is not stated in the material) and a Holy Spirit-orchestrated regeneration as described in Ezekiel 36:25-27.
- Along with the imagery of being “born again” there comes imagery of being a spiritual infant. Actually, the Bible calls them a ‘babe’ in several places. So it needs to be made clear that when they are “born again” they don’t suddenly become perfectly obedient any more than a child becomes perfectly obedient in their first few years of life. We’ll look later at how spiritual growth is a progressive process.

SESSION 5 [What is “Good News?”]

Purpose of the Session: Explain how the kingdom of God is “good news”

Key Points to help them understand:

- Jesus was sent to preach the “gospel” means “good news” of the kingdom (total sovereign authority) of God. This puts great importance on what He teaches in this as well as the fact it is “good news”.
- The “good news” of the kingdom of God needs to be redefined from what we commonly think of as “good news” based on our obsession with the physical. The “good news” Jesus speaks about refers to the new delightful opportunities that open up when you are free from the tyranny of selfish desires and experience the unexplainable joy of sensing His whispers of love and approval as we work alongside of Him doing the work He has assigned to us. A way to communicate this might be to focus them on

how they felt when they did what they sensed was right for God in contrast to what they knew was wrong. One brought inner joy while the other brought far less than that!

- When God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit (Ez. 36:25-26), because it is His very nature, He brings joy, love and a desire to obey the Father. This gift is empowering.
- Luke 16:16 has confused translators, especially to those who have not yet understood Jesus' concept of the kingdom of God/heaven. Matthew version (Mt. 11:12) of this verse uses the term "violence" which literally means "to use or apply force". All this means the kingdom of God is sought for with the most intense exertion or fervent zeal in spite of the violent opposition of Satanic forces using our independent sin nature, distractions, discouragements, deception, fears, misunderstandings, etc.. This interpretation of the verse referring to internal passion overrules other concepts that focus on an adversarial external force which attempts to hinder or stop its progress. The correct internal kind of passion that Jesus refers to here is illustrated in the Syrophenician woman in Mark 7:24-30, as well as, the woman who had discharged blood for years in Mark 5:25-29.
- The joy of kingdom living increase only as a person nurtures their God-given desire to experience greater intimacy with and service to the King.

SESSION 6 [Is the Kingdom Present or Future?]

Purpose of the Session: Explain how the kingdom of God is both future and present

Key Points to help them understand:

- Since the kingdom of God is a condition wherever God's sovereignty reigns, it is not limited to a time or place. In that light, the Bible can refer to the kingdom in both the present and future tense. While God eventually will ultimately fully reign on earth as He does in heaven, yet whenever man is in total submission to God while on earth as the angels are in heaven, His kingdom is also in the present here and now.
- In that light, the catalyst for becoming spiritual mature is an active (vs passive) faith that motivates us to learn His values, ways and rules from His Word and learn to listen for His whispers and obey when we hear Him give us directions for that occasion, or when we reflect on His glory and He transfigures us.
- You can bring a bit of God's future kingdom into the present for others each time you help another person align themselves with God's kingdom by genuinely surrendering their lives to God's authority, or when we cooperate with God and He uses us to bring healing, deliverance or even temporarily change the laws of nature for His purposes. This is what true kingdom ministry is all about.

SESSION 7 [Growing in the Kingdom]

Purpose of the Session: Offer guidelines on how to grow in God's kingdom

Key Points to help them understand:

- To help them most accurately assess where they are in their spiritual journey, you might offer this question; "If a judge objectively examined your life using your daily schedule, checkbook entries, and what you wrote or talked about with passion and your circle of close friends, what level of spiritual growth would you suppose that judge might place you in?" How might that be different from how you might see yourself?"
- Contrary to common thought, the Bible teaches a person who exercises spiritual gifts is **not** necessarily spiritually mature; in fact, they may not even be authentic believers (Matthew 7:21-23). But of course, the Holy Spirit will also choose to flow His gifts through those spiritually mature. Spiritual maturity is focused on total submission to

God's laws, ways and values while just exercising spiritual gifts is focused on doing spiritual deeds. God has shown that He will use a donkey, heathen kings, or anyone to do His deeds. Your objective as a leader is to guide them to focus on authentic spiritual maturity and then inspire them to take their next step towards that.

- Please be sure you are conversant with the words the Bible uses to describe spiritual maturity (babe, children, young man, father), as well as how we handle the maturity stages in the spiritual 'map' we distribute. While the Bible identifies four unique post-salvation spiritual stages of maturity, we merge the first two of them and provide a map consisting of one pre-salvation stage and three post-salvation stages. It is important for a person to at least understand the stages in our 'tract' and to rightly identify which stage they are in and make deliberate steps to grow into greater spiritual maturity.
- A fearful and clingy small child can be an indicator of unhealthy dependence. A child who refuses to allow his parents to teach him or do anything for him shows unhealthy independence. Healthy independence (interdependence) is a balance between these extreme where there is both dependence as well as having enough independence to be able to confidently say 'no' to wrong things their peers want them to do. Man's unhealthy independent attitude became the most catalytic component in disrupting God's kingdom's original "righteousness, peace and joy", and it still has the same effect on us today. Therefore, it is critical to one's spiritual growth that they remain very guarded in allowing their independent attitude to motivate or guide their decisions.

SESSION 8 [Spiritual Cancer]

Purpose of the Session: Warn about Spiritual Cancer

Key Points to help them understand:

- While the issue of independence and rebellion need to be clearly dealt with, endeavor to stress whenever possible, the benefits of living a life dependent upon God—as a compliant preschooler is dependent upon their parents.
- Rebellion is so severe because it takes independence into the assertive stage and becomes the very antithesis of submission to the King of the kingdom or the life of a Christ-centered person. Independence is like cancer in remission and rebellion is like cancer that has come out of remission. There is a fine line between healthy independence and the budding of rebellion.
- The message of the kingdom is a direct attack on independence, especially rebellion.
- Most of our stress/frustration is simply evidence of a wrestling within us between our pride, insistence on doing things our way or the way of our culture, etc., and submitting to God's laws, values or ways.
- The sin nature (Romans 8:12-13) is a person's independent nature (sub-conscious bias) inherited from Adam and Eve. Paul wrestled with that in Romans 7 and every person will also wrestle with until they draw their last breath. And giving in to it will separate us from God as it did Adam and Eve, separating them from God so they could not, and would not, hear or follow His whispers.
- It would be best if you could again review the concept of grace and mercy mentioned in these notes under Session 1 as you wrap up this series.

Tips that came out of our recent seminar that may be helpful for you to consider as you prepare to lead a small group in the Kingdom of God video series.

- Session 1: Please be make sure you read the important note found in the Leader's Guide about grace as it relates to the Kingdom of God. If you don't understand what is said there, please contact one of the Pastors. If you do understand it, please make sure you insert the stated concept into the group discussion in order to minimize the probability of those who may dismiss the teaching because it doesn't include the role grace plays in a believer's life.
- Session 2: The purpose of Discovery Question #2 is to help each person see that salvation is both instantaneous and progressive in nature. Therefore a new believer will instantly experience some changes in their desire to obey God's teachings, etc., as well as progressively experience an inner need to obey new things the Holy Spirit may convict them about as the days and years progress.
- ✓ Session 4:
 - ~ The purpose of Discovery Question #2 is to provoke thought on how they can come to enjoy more pleasures (the type the angels currently experience) by considering the bigger pictures found in the Bible of how God normally works with man. (EX. The Bible teaches there is a great deal of pleasure when we hear God's whispers and do whatever He says with a grateful heart.)
 - ~ It would be good to make sure they understand the coming of the Holy Spirit in a person's life when they are regenerated (Ezekiel 36:25-27) is God's work of grace that enable us to not only desire to do the King's laws, but also to actually live out those laws. (Romans 8:2-4)
 - ~ At some point it might also be helpful to have your group consider Jesus' response to Thomas questions about how to get to God (the King) when He said John 14:6 ESV Jesus said to him, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" Try to help them see Jesus doesn't claim to be the 'end' but only the 'way' to the end—the King.
- ✓ Session 5: Some may question the 'rightness' of the man hiding a treasure and not telling the owner of the land of the treasure first. You will want to point out a) the man who found the 'treasure' (kingdom) obviously didn't already have the 'treasure' (kingdom) within him so we can't expect him to be righteous. But the primary point and far more important purpose in the parable is b) to show the authentic joy that generated the passion he had to obtain the treasure (truth of the kingdom of God). The reality is, the truth of the kingdom of God truly does offer us authentic, great joy when its truth finally penetrates our heart to the point we live it out.
- Session 7: In the Discover questions, the group is asked to read Isaiah 14:12-14. The passage consists of a prophecy against the king of Babylon (v 4) but typical of prophecies, there is a deeper meaning than what appears on the surface. In that light, "Lucifer" mentioned there is commonly interpreted to referencing Satan's pride that led to his fall from Heaven.

To: All Small Group Leaders
Re: Kingdom of God Study

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