

Stewardship

Kingdom, Mission & Money

Session 1 | Stewardship

Introduction

The purpose of this two-week study is to help us better understand what the Kingdom of God is, and how all Christians are called to the mission of seeing God's Kingdom come 'on earth as it is in heaven'. The first Study focuses on the principles of the Kingdom of God. The second study explores how we should use our money in light of these principles. Each study begins with a "Worship Preparation" designed to assist the group in its focus on God as our King.

Worship Preparation (10-15 Minutes)

Read Psalm 47

1. Read the Psalm out loud and note the themes of God as King. (vs. 2, 6, 7)
2. What attributes of Kingship does the Psalmist see as praiseworthy? (vs.1 - all nations; 3 - 'subdued'; 8 - 'reigns', 9 - 'the earth belongs to God')
3. How do these attributes bring 'joy'? (vs. 1, 5) and 'comfort'? (vs. 9)
4. Take some time as a group to offer up prayers of praise, focusing on God's rule as the King to whom 'the earth belongs'. (vs. 9)

Bible Study/Discussion (60 minutes)

Introduction

These beginning words of "The Lord's Prayer" draw us into the heart of the ministry of Jesus. Jesus came to make the Kingdom of God visible on earth.

Read Mark 1:14,15, Matthew 4:12-14, 16-17

Jesus' words and deeds as recorded in the Gospels (healing the sick, feeding the hungry, casting out demons) were signs that the Kingdom of God was at hand. The "Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:9-13), implies that as citizens of the Kingdom, we are called to participate in the ministry of Jesus ("on earth as it is in heaven"). Matthew records this prayer as part of a longer section of Jesus' teaching on matters ranging from anger and forgiveness to compassion and money .

The implication is that every area of our life falls under God's rule. He has called us to be his people, and expects that we would seek to follow his laws, his values, and his priorities - in other words, his mission. But as we will see, this is not to be a legalistic or harsh obedience borne out of fear, but a willing conformity to the purposes of God motivated by our gratitude for the love Christ demonstrated for us through his death on the cross.

1. What images come to mind when you think about a king? How does the notion of a kingdom differ with most of our political and cultural experiences/backgrounds? How might our "Western" mindset limit our understanding/experience of God as King?

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:
 “ ‘Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
¹⁰your kingdom come,
 your will be done
 on earth as it is in heaven.’ ”
 (NIV) Matthew 6:9,10

Refer back to Psalm 47 to reinforce Scripture's understanding of God as King:

2. Read Isaiah 11:1-9 below. What does this passage teach us about the longings for the Kingdom and the characteristics of the Kingdom?

3. What are the implications of Jesus' statement in Luke 4:21 ("Today this ...fulfilled....")?

Read Luke 11:20 & Mark 4:23 What do these verses teach us about how Jesus made the Kingdom a reality to his community? What are the implications for our lives as individuals?

4. Read the passages below. Discuss what it means that we are a "people" who are working towards seeing the Lord's Prayer answered ("thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven").

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

5. Gospel Meditation. Where do I find the motivation to live for God? Where do I find the mercy, compassion, generosity, integrity to live this Kingdom lifestyle? How does the passage below help us? What does it tell us about Jesus our King?

Read Philippians 2:3-11

This passage is full of language calling us to a 'kingdom lifestyle'. We are to live lives of humility; lives that reflect the heart of Jesus. By looking to the interests of others the way Jesus did, we will see manifestations of God's Kingdom in our relationships, families, jobs, and neighborhoods.

Yet, we must realize that our tendency instead is to put our own interests first. Therefore, Paul in this letter to the Philippians reminds us that what we need is to gaze at Jesus. We must see that although he had everything (vs. 6) he put our interests ahead of his own - to the point of 'death on the cross' (vs. 8). Romans 5:8 says that 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'. In other words, while we were preoccupied with our agenda, he came to serve us through a redemptive death. Meditating on Christ's obedience for our sake, will fuel our obedience for his sake.

Take some time as a group to rejoice over Christ's sacrifice. Also, take time to pray for the shalom of the City (for the homeless, poor, marginalized, our political and business leaders, our neighbors and families).