

The Kingdom

By David L. Allen

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Mark 1:14–15 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are three things in the Gospels that Jesus said about the kingdom of God?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Mark 1:14–15 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What is the relationship between repentance and faith as requirements to enter God's kingdom?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Matthew 6:33 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: From the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7, what are some of the ethical standards for disciples to follow as members of the kingdom?

Scripture to Memorize

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the doctrine of the kingdom of God and how Jesus teaches us to think, speak, and act as members of the kingdom.

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He is the author of *Hebrews* in the New American Commentary series; *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*; *1–3 John: Fellowship in God's Family* in the Preaching the Word series; and *Preaching Tools: An Annotated Survey of Commentaries and Preaching Resources for Every Book of the Bible*. David also is the coeditor and contributor of *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, *Text-Driven Preaching*, and *The Return of Christ: a Premillennial Perspective*. You can follow David on Twitter @drdavidlallen and on Facebook at David Lewis Allen. His website is www.drdavidlallen.com.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

What if America had a king rather than a president? What difference do you think this would make in your daily life? How would you respond to the desires and commands of the king?

As a child of God, you do live in a kingdom with a King. What difference should that make in your daily life?

The Kingdom of God

Read Mark 1:14–15 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 15. the kingdom of God is at hand. The presence of God's kingdom among people and the full manifestation of the coming of the kingdom of God in the future was the central message of Jesus. This is evidenced by the number of times Jesus spoke about the "kingdom of God" in the four Gospels (more than one hundred times, many of which are in the parables Jesus taught). Jesus said He came preaching that "the kingdom of God is at hand."

- Jesus used parables to teach about the kingdom of God (Matthew 13:11).
- He performed miracles, demonstrating that the kingdom of God had come to those who heard Him preach and teach (Matthew 12:28).
- He taught the disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10).
- Jesus promised His disciples on the night before His death that they would see Him again and they would share in the fellowship of the kingdom (Luke 22:22–30).
- He promised to come back to earth one day to bring all the blessings of the kingdom to those for whom it was prepared (Matthew 25:31, 34).

In the Old Testament, God is spoken of as ruling over all the kingdoms of the earth and as ruling over His kingdom (Psalm 47:2; Psalm 103:19; Daniel 4:17, 25–37).

How should we define the "kingdom of God"? The kingdom of God describes God's authority to rule and the realm (people) over which He reigns. The kingdom of God is the reign of God. When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, He was not speaking of a geographical area or a political entity. God's rule is independent of all geographical and political realms.

His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that will one day have a geographical dimension when Jesus returns to the earth to establish His kingdom rule. The kingdom of God is both a present and a future reality. The kingdom has "already" and "not yet" dimensions.

In Matthew's Gospel, Matthew preferred the phrase "kingdom of heaven," which he used more than twenty times. The meaning is the same. Out of deference to the Jews who don't like to speak the name of God, Matthew was likely using "heaven" in place of "God." Compare Matthew 5:3 with Luke 6:20.

In His parables, Jesus spoke of the kingdom in many different ways. He said the kingdom is like a farmer (Matthew 13:24), a seed (Matthew 13:31), yeast (Matthew 13:33), a treasure (Matthew 13:44), a pearl merchant (Matthew 13:45), a fishnet (Matthew 13:47), an employer (Matthew 20:1), and a king inviting people to a marriage feast (Matthew 22:2). These similes are

designed to illustrate the nature of the kingdom, its growth, its value, etc.

The phrase “kingdom of God” also occurs in Acts, Paul’s letters, and the book of Revelation.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What are three things in the Gospels that Jesus said about the kingdom of God?

Discussion Question

In what ways are disciples “foreign exchange students”? In other words, how is citizenship in Christ’s kingdom more real and more important than citizenship in an earthly kingdom?

Studying the Passage

Verse 14. proclaiming the gospel of God. Mark said this is what Jesus came to do.

Verse 15. the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. This was the content of what Jesus preached. Jesus connected closely the concept of the kingdom of God with the gospel and preaching. Notice also Jesus said that to enter God’s kingdom, you must repent and believe in the gospel.

Repent is a word that has to do with sin and means “to change your mind about your sin with a resulting change of behavior.” The idea is to do an “about-face”—a 180-degree turn. Repentance in the Bible is more than merely being sorry you got caught!

Believe is one of the most important words in the New Testament. It means “to exercise complete trust in someone; to have faith in him.” In the Bible, repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. You cannot have one without the other. You can’t believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior until you understand that you are a sinner and are willing to repent of your sin.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: What is the relationship between repentance and faith as requirements to enter God’s kingdom?

Read Matthew 6:33 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 33. seek first the kingdom of God. Jesus reigns today as King because of His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to heaven. One day He will return to the earth to consummate His kingdom rule. In the meantime, as disciples of Jesus, we are citizens of His kingdom and should think, talk and act as such. Our character and conduct should identify us as members of God’s kingdom.

Ethics in the Kingdom of God

What are God’s kingdom ethics? The best place to observe these is in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). In this sermon, Jesus taught us how to live in His kingdom. Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 7:21). It

takes more than just hearing the truth and knowing the truth. We must practice God's truth, as well.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following question: From the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7, what are some of the ethical standards for disciples to follow as members of the kingdom?

On Your Own

A parent, a boss and the president of the United States are tangible authorities in your life. Do you think of Jesus as your actual King? In your mind's eye, do you tend to see Him as a reigning monarch? In the space below, write a brief prayer to His Majesty. Consider telling Him you love Him, you are in awe of Him, and you look forward to a lifetime of kingdom adventures under His reign.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** at the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: “In our last session I made a commitment to. . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . .”

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

In this lesson we have looked at what the Bible says about the kingdom of God and what it means for us to be a part of it and to live under the authority of King Jesus.

- We have learned that the kingdom of God is His sovereign rule over all.
- It is a spiritual kingdom with Christ at the center.
- People enter the kingdom by obeying the gospel through repentance and faith.
- Disciples of Christ live out the standards of the kingdom as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount and the ethical passages of the New Testament.
- One day Jesus will return to the earth to establish His kingdom and reign over all.

As disciples, we are to seek the kingdom of God.

- This means we seek to live righteously according to the standards God has given for His kingdom.
- As disciples, the Holy Spirit indwells us and empowers us to live out God's kingdom dictates in a way that is pleasing to Him.
- Because of grace, we not only are in awe of our mighty King, but we also have a warm relationship with Him.
- We join King Jesus in bringing His kingdom on earth. In so doing, we fulfill the reason we were created and placed on the earth—for the glory of God.

Follow up Question

What should a disciple's attitude, belief and action be concerning the kingdom of God?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.