

DO KINGDOM THINGS DEVOTIONAL

Introduction:

NYC 2015 is going to change your life! We are so glad that you have decided to join with thousands of other students from across the USA and Canada to pray “Thy Kingdom come.”

The kingdom of God is the central message of Jesus’ life. His teaching, miracles, and actions all point to the kingdom of God as both a present reality and a future experience. God’s reign or Kingdom has been launched in the life and ministry of Jesus, but its ultimate realization remains a future experience. This is why when we pray “Thy Kingdom come,” what we are really saying is, “God, I commit to living a life that stands up for and represents Jesus to the world,” and at the same time, while living out this creed in the present, we wait expectantly for the day the Kingdom is complete.

What are Kingdom things?

As we await Kingdom completion, we are called by Jesus to live a life that reflects the Kingdom God desires. To *Do Kingdom Things*, therefore, means that we believe in the Kingdom and we want everyone everywhere to experience God as King. We take action and choose to faithfully and joyfully do things that help people everywhere experience God. To *Do Kingdom Things* is to participate with God in making the world look like heaven—right here, right now—on earth. We act that we might welcome strangers, make peace, share the gospel, feed the hungry, etc. To *Do Kingdom Things* is to be Jesus to all and announce the kingdom of God.

How do I make the most of this *Do Kingdom Things* project?

This app is going to help you to *Do Kingdom Things*. There is no need to wait until we all get to Louisville to take action. Let’s start here and now! Each Monday through Friday, you will be given at least two activities to live out, with a total of forty days’ worth of activities for you to act on. But you don’t have to stop there! If you think of something to do to represent Jesus to those around you...do that! These activities are meant to spark your imagination. We will also send you scripture to read and pray over and questions for you discuss with others you may know who are coming to NYC 2015.

To make the most of this *Do Kingdom Things* project, consider making a commitment with two or three others coming to Louisville in July and help each other take action. Let’s do this. Let’s start living God’s kingdom right here, right now!

We believe in you! We are counting on you! We are praying for you! We can’t wait to see you! Whisper this prayer and launch your commitment to Kingdom living:

God, I want to show others – everyone, everywhere – that you are King. I pray that I might be faithful over this 40 day challenge to live in such a way to prove to you and to everyone around me that you are my King. Thy Kingdom come!

Do Kingdom Things: 40 Daily Activities

1. U-Turn

Matthew 3:2 (NASB)

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Activity 1:

Repenting is the action of turning from doing something life-taking toward doing something that is life-giving. Attitudes, actions, or associates may need to be repented from to align with the flow of the kingdom of God. The marching orders with which Jesus deploys His disciples invite people to turn toward God and God's rule in their lives and relationships. When you make a U-turn in a car, it is because you are headed the wrong direction and need to redirect. Ask the Lord to search your heart, mind, and life; see if there is any area where you are in need of a U-turn, and then take action to align with the Spirit's leading.

Galatians 4:9 (NASB)

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Activity 2:

Approaching friends about issues in their lives is often easier than dealing with our own junk. After you have sorted yourself with Jesus, if you have a friend or family member you have been thinking and praying about who might also need to make a U-turn to align with God's Kingdom, see if the Spirit is giving you freedom to talk with that person. Write a letter. Schedule a movie night and hang out afterward.

Prayer Theme: God-turns

We have little moments of either turning toward God or edging away from the Kingdom daily. Use this phrase to firmly resolve to be ever turning toward God's Kingdom purposes.

Questions

1. Do you have anyone you can talk to about blind spots you have in your life where you may need to U-turn toward God?
2. Can you identify an area or attitude in your life where you don't need to make a complete U-turn but may be resisting the grace of God and going with the flow of Kingdom traffic?
3. How could you explain "the kingdom of God being near" to someone else?
4. What are some examples you notice in others when it's obvious the kingdom of God is flowing through their lives?

2. Kingdom

Matthew 6:10 (NASB)

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

Activity 1:

Many people live at least two different lives to some degree, acting one way with family and another way with friends. Living with integrity means you live consistently regardless of who is around you. It means your grandma would be proud to know what you are doing. God's holiness is not separated from the reality of the everyday but is interwoven at a microscopic level. Cooperating with the goodness and grace of God in your reality is the thrust of this prayer. Your life on earth and the presence of God's reign (Kingdom) should overlap. Make a list of things you find yourself doing or tempted to do on a regular basis that you know do not reflect the reign of God. Do the same with Kingdom things you do. What do these two lists show you about your life and how it matches up with Kingdom living?

Romans 12:2 (NASB)

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Activity 2:

There is a personal *and* a social aspect to the reign of God on earth. When you are in relationship with God, you are trusted to pursue His Kingdom coming on earth to the best of your ability. This is the will of God: right relationship with God and others. If you have anyone in your life with whom you know you are not in right relationship and you can do something about making things right, go for it and bring some heaven to earth! Ask forgiveness. Pay the person back. Bring some flowers. Repair a fence. Love an enemy. Give back twice as much as was taken from you.

Prayer Theme: Kingdom come

As you pray throughout the day, be open to God directing you toward God's will and your mind being transformed. Conform to God's heavenly Kingdom coming!

Discussion Questions

1. Describe what thoughts or images come to mind when you hear the phrase *the will of God*.
2. Do you think God has one specific course for your life or is relationship with God more of a cooperative involving you, God, life, relationships, and circumstances?
3. Where do you notice God's Kingdom coming on earth?
4. Can there be any place where the kingdom of God cannot go or any part of creation where God's will cannot be accomplished?

3. First

Matthew 6:33 (NASB)

But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Activity 1:

If there is anything in your life more important than your relationship with God, then God's Kingdom does not rule and reign through you. Write down a word that represents one thing you think might compete with God in your life then draw the symbol of the cross through it. Instead of getting rid of this thing or crossing it out, invite Jesus into the midst of it—unless it's something you *should* get rid of or stop doing. If that is the case, do everything you must to eliminate it from your life, seeking help and accountability from fellow disciples of Jesus to make it happen.

Colossians 3:17 (NASB)

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Activity 2:

Calendars can represent making the kingdom of God first in your life. The schedule of your life will tell you if the most important and defining relationship of your life is Jesus. This doesn't mean adding more church activities, but it may mean focusing on God's Kingdom in other ways: serving a shut-in neighbor, tutoring younger kids, helping a family member with a chore, or serving in a community project that celebrates God's beauty in a park, art, clean-up, or a cause of justice.

Prayer Theme: Seek kingdom

This short prayer is to be repeated throughout the day as a way to synchronize your mind, heart, and body with God's reign in the reality of your life.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean in your life to pursue God's Kingdom first?
2. Does your schedule represent the Kingdom? How can others tell?
3. Do you serve God to get something?
4. What has to go in your life for God's Kingdom to be first?

4. Everything

Matthew 10:7 (NASB)

And as you go, preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Activity 1:

Not everyone is a preacher, but every life preaches something. Our values shape who we are as people, and we communicate those values to others by the way we live. As a follower of Jesus, the values we communicate and what our lives preach should be different. Jesus is our value. Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection are where we find our value. As Christians, our value is not in a principle, idea, or moral. We do not worship those concepts. We worship and follow a person--Jesus! For today’s first activity, list all the ways you can think of that your life is good news for other people. If your list is too short for your liking, work on brainstorming ways to lengthen it with the help of Jesus’s Spirit. When you feel pretty good about your list, move on to the next activity.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NASB)

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Activity 2:

If you think your life preaches and proclaims that the kingdom of heaven (God’s reign) is real in your life, then great! Now take it a step further. In everything—and I mean *everything*—you do today, offer your life as a way of broadcasting that the kingdom of heaven is near. Use your actions and attitude, not just your words. Take out the garbage or clean up after your pet with an attitude of joy. Handle your homework with honor. Back down from an argument you often get bogged down in with grace. Receive discipline (whether you deserve it or not) with respect and appreciation for those who oversee you and your growth. In every little thing you do, let God’s Kingdom reign!

Prayer Theme: In everything

Mentally repeat this two-word prayer through the day as a way to remind yourself to preach God’s Kingdom being near and to give God glory in *everything*.

Discussion Questions

1. What did you write on your list as ways your life preaches God’s Kingdom?
2. Name an area of life where you are not proclaiming God’s Kingdom.
3. Can you think of an activity or situation in which it is especially difficult to give God glory?
4. Which of your friends do you see as people who preach God’s Kingdom with their lives and give God glory in everything?

5. Possess

Matthew 13:45 (NASB)

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls...

Activity 1:

Your most prized possession speaks volumes about your identity. If your most prized possession is of greater value to you than the relationships in your life, you have a problem. If the human relationships in your life are more important than your relationship with God, you also have a problem. When right relationship with Jesus is the most important goal, other relationships and things have a way of properly aligning in importance. If you have an object (e.g., phone, tablet, car, sport, activity, hobby, clothes, music, etc.) which has become of greater value to you than your relationship with Jesus, consider taking a break from it for a while. Use the time you would typically dedicate to the object to invest in your relationships with God, family members, friends, neighbors, and your community. Start small, giving something up for one day, and see what you notice about yourself and your relationship with Jesus.

Acts 3:6 (NASB)

But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!"

Activity 2:

If you want to get really hard-core, sell the possession you prize so much as an act of devotion, and use the proceeds to make a difference in someone's life. You could make a donation to a local homeless shelter, contribute to clean drinking water in another country, or support campaigns against human trafficking. This extreme act of devotion is intended to demonstrate that everything you have is a gift and that your possessions do not possess you.

Prayer Theme: In Jesus' name

Mentally repeat this three-word phrase throughout the day as a constant reminder that the most precious treasure to you must be your relationship with Jesus. All other relationships with people and possessions flow from this primary relationship. Ask Jesus to help you align your priorities correctly.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your most prized possession, and why is it so important to you?
2. Is this possession more important to you than your relationship with God or relationships with other people?
3. Would you consider selling this possession to demonstrate that it does not have possession of you?
4. How can you tell if someone's most prized treasure is his or her relationship with Jesus?

6. Keys

Matthew 16:19 (NASB)

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Activity 1:

Think of piano keys. You press them with your fingers and musical notes are produced. With enough practice with these keys, eventually you can make beautiful music. Now consider your relationship with Jesus. If your life is in harmony with the Creator of all the heavens and earth, beauty flows from all you do. If you do not live in right relationship with God, your life and relationships are characterized by dissonance. Listen to music today that brings you closer to God in message, creativity, and sound. (Hint: It can be music that is expressly labeled Christian, but it does not have to be.) If you gain any inspiration from this activity of listening, act on it and loose on earth what you heard whispered from heaven.

1 Corinthians 13:1 (NASB)

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Activity 2:

Once your relationship with God is in tune, think about the areas of your life where this is reflected. Even if you are not a musical person, you are able to recognize when music is being played well and when it is being played poorly. The same principle applies with any activity. God has given you the freedom to enjoy life and participate in God’s Kingdom by doing the things you love which bring Him glory. The key is to not forget where the privilege or ability to participate in these activities comes from: God. God has given you authority as His child to share His love. Show Christ and His love to those around you as you do the things you love with the intention of living God's Kingdom on earth.

Prayer Theme: Heavenly keys

Let God set heaven loose in your life today. In all of your interactions with others and through any activities you participate in, use this prayer to remind yourself to tune your life to God and allow His beauty and love to resonate through your life. Be free in the grace of God, and see what God does through you.

Discussion Questions

1. Does your relationship with God feel loose or bound today?
2. Are you feeling loose or bound in friendship with others?
3. Can you name something you know God is doing through you that helps bring about His Kingdom?
4. What kind of music do you listen to for inspiration?

7. Identity

Matthew 19:12 (NASB)

For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.

Activity 1:

Your identity is comprised of the many different aspects of who you are. How you process these realities within yourself and with your friends, family, and the surrounding culture influences on your identity formation. As a follower of Jesus, your identity comes from Him and from how God created you. Jesus emphasizes membership in God's Kingdom as foremost for identity. Today's challenge is to not label yourself according to worldly or cultural standards (even church or community) but instead focus on the fact you are a person created in the image of God and deeply loved by Him. Make this the most important and formative element of your identity.

Galatians 3:28 (NASB)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Activity 2:

If you can choose to see yourself as an image bearer of God above any other part of your identity, then you can also look past label barriers with others. Identify a label you often place on other people or groups, and then consult with someone you trust about your perspective. Ask Jesus to transform your vision to a Kingdom perspective of persons and identity.

Prayer Theme: One in Christ

Pray this short phrase throughout the day to help you focus on Jesus' Kingdom perspective, viewing others with the love of God and challenging labels you may not be aware you project.

Discussion Questions

1. How does believing everyone is made in the image of God mess with you?
2. Can you think of ways the story of God in the Bible has shaped your identity?
3. What do you do when people believe things about their identities that you think are unhealthy?
4. Name and discuss some of the main identity issues in the church and culture today.

8. Guidance

Matthew 20:21 (NASB)

And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in your Kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."

Activity 1:

Ask Jesus to give you direction in how He wants to guide your life. You may already have ideas and dreams about what you want to do. It may be that God has placed those things within your heart. Follow Jesus in those dreams. On the other hand, you may have asked but are yet unsure. Keep praying and seeking Him. If, however, you have not given Jesus permission to guide your life nor prayed for His guidance and you are afraid to allow Him to, then you have some things to sort out with God. Get to it! There is a lot to explore in God's Kingdom.

Acts 16:6-7 (NASB)

They passed through the Phrygian and Galatia region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the spirit of Jesus did not permit them.

Activity 2:

For this activity, ask Jesus to give you an assignment that may be tough for you to do but that you want to do as a way to express your love, devotion, and complete surrender to His will in your life doing Kingdom things. You may sense the challenge to speak to someone out of your comfort zone, help out a sibling, or do something completely random but significant to you and Jesus. Tell a Christ-following friend to keep you accountable to following through.

Prayer Theme: Guide me

As you pray this prayer through the flow of your activities, give Jesus permission to guide your actions and shape your responses in every situation and interaction.

Discussion Questions

1. How have you given Jesus complete control over all the areas of your life?
2. How have you been changed by submitting to the spirit of Jesus to cleanse you from the desire to do anything that would oppose God's rule in your life?
3. In what ways will you allow Jesus to be the first and foremost decision maker and trailblazer in your life?
4. Is there something Jesus is preventing you from doing even though it seems right?

9. Judge

Matthew 25:34 (NASB)

Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Activity 1:

We are all going to be judged by God, and if we are honest with ourselves, we often try to usurp His role by judging others. As King, Jesus serves as Judge, and His verdicts may be very different from how we are inclined to judge. Instead of being quick to condemn, view others with the compassion and love of Christ. Assume the best of others instead of the worst and see how it affects your relationships. Judging is part of God’s Kingdom activity, but it is God’s responsibility toward those who do not believe, not ours.

1 Corinthians 5:12 (NASB)

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?

Activity 2:

While judging all people is God’s job, the members of the Church have a responsibility to be just in any judgements toward one another as brothers and sisters. This is to be a life-giving activity that attracts people toward relationship with God instead of repelling. We have a sacred responsibility, as expressed through dedications, baptisms, church membership, and more, to sharpen one another in the love of Christ. Will we serve freely or for our own gain? Accountability regarding our motives will help us discern between the two. Pray about selecting an accountability partner and follow through on asking a friend—one for whom you don’t have anything resembling romantic feelings—to journey with you and provide frank feedback regarding your motivations and judgments.

Prayer Theme: Judge justly

Silently recite this prayer to prepare the soil of your life for God’s Kingdom to grow through your actions and responses. Serve for God’s glory and not your own. See Jesus everywhere!

Discussion Questions

1. Do you notice a judgmental spirit in yourself during specific times or situations?
2. Are you afraid or unafraid of God’s judgment?
3. When you notice others judging you, what is your response?
4. How can judging be a healthy way for Christ followers to relate to one another to advance God’s Kingdom?

10. Kidding

Mark 10:14 (NASB)

But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Activity 1:

If you are following Jesus, you are a child of the King, and the Kingdom is yours. If you are not enjoying being in the kingdom of God, that probably has more to do with you than with God. Reflect on something you truly enjoy about God's reign in your life and celebrate that aspect of your faith today. It may be a song, friendship, scripture, scenery, humor, talent, or personal experience. Do something childlike today that represents your journey in Christ, and make no apologies. Live it up, and enjoy being a kid in the Kingdom!

1 John 3:18 (NASB)

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

Activity 2:

As a child of the King, playing in God's kingdom, your actions and words should point to God's reign in your life. People make friends based on how other people act and deciding if they want to hang out with them. Eventually, when making friends, you may invite them over to your house. As a child of the kingdom of God, invite someone to your house, youth group, or church. Do this from the perspective of a kid wanting to share his or her faith family with a friend. Expect to enjoy your time together and see what God does in you and your friend.

Prayer Theme: Word and deed

With childlike faith, ask Jesus to influence and direct your every word and deed as you prayerfully repeat these words throughout the day.

Discussion Questions

1. How does being a kid in God's Kingdom shift your perspective of being a believer?
2. By what words or actions do people know you are one of God's kids?
3. Who are some friends with whom you'd like to share your faith in Christ by inviting them over?
4. What do you think it means to have childlike faith?

11. Roots

Mark 11:10 (NASB)

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!

Activity 1:

When the Hebrew people recognized Jesus as their King, they connected Him back to King David. They thought the kingdom on earth was going to be renewed when Jesus rode into town. Instead, He became King in the hearts of everyone who believes. How they saw faith and how Jesus desired them to have faith differed. Ask your parents or grandparents about their faith. Dig into your faith roots and allow Jesus to guide your conversation with family regarding faith.

Acts 17:28 (NASB)

...for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, "For we also are His children."

Activity 2:

As you dig into your own faith roots, also consider examining the roots of another denomination that is common in your area. Look into their main tenants and compare them with the Apostles' Creed. See what common ground can be shared as a bridge of faith in Christ. If you have a friend who is a member of this other denomination, ask if you can discuss your beliefs together. Wait on the Holy Spirit to guide your conversation in His love as you strengthen the roots of your faith in Jesus and discover the meaning behind your friend's faith. Participate in God's Kingdom by recognizing God's truth wherever it may be found.

Prayer Theme: Live, move, exist

Every part of your life is sustained by the presence of Jesus. You live, move, and exist because of Him. Dwell in this reality of dependence on Him.

Discussion Questions

1. Have your family members ever shared their stories of faith or perspectives with you?
2. What are you learning about the kingdom of God that is different from what you have thought in the past?
3. Are there aspects of another belief system you notice may align with truths of faith in Christ?
4. How can studying another faith be beneficial to our faith in Christ and how we approach others with the love of Jesus?

12. Heard

Mark 12:34 (NASB)

When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

Activity1:

Knowing what you believe and doing something about that knowledge are both necessary steps in forming the heart of a Christ follower. You may have heard and know all the right answers, but your mind, heart, and strength could remain unaligned in action. Rate your mind, body, and spirit on a scale of 1-5 to determine which area of your relationship with God needs the most attention. Act on God's invitation to be a whole person and be fully integrated into God's Kingdom living.

James 1:22, 27 (NASB)

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Activity 2:

Realizing which area you need to work on most in order to fully reflect Christ can be a heap of fun! You may know somebody living alone. Handcraft a card with a note and prayer. Leave it at the door of an elderly person living in your neighborhood. If they find out you did it, offer to help with some chores. Another idea for doing Kingdom things would be to talk with your parents about your family sponsoring a child. (hyperlink: <http://cs.ncm.org/>)

Prayer Theme: Hear and do

Repeat this prayer theme, focusing on honoring God in your heart and mind and reflecting Him in your actions as a way of drawing ever nearer to the reality of God's Kingdom.

Discussion Questions

1. In which area are you closest to God's Kingdom: heart, mind, or strength?
2. What can you do about aligning the out-of-sync area(s)?
3. How do you show that your knowledge of God is at work in your everyday living?
4. What inspires you when you hear stories about people being helped in their time of need?

13. Drink

Mark 14:25 (NASB)

Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Activity 1:

The Christ-centered practice of fasting is intentionally choosing to give up something in order to make more room for God in your life. Fasting is meant to be a fullness, not an emptiness. If you have never fasted and experienced this type of fellowship with God, ask Him to impress on you something that may be distracting you from daily following God and that you know you can give up without drawing attention to yourself. After you have identified the thing from which you will fast, use the time you would otherwise have spent on this thing to pray, listen, read Scripture, or meditate on God's presence. You could also drink some water or grape juice, remembering that Jesus is fasting until He makes all things new.

1 Corinthians 11:26 (NASB)

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Activity 2:

Feasting is a way Christians celebrate the kingdom of God being present now and coming in the future. Fasting and feasting go together, neither one replacing the other permanently. Both disciplines prepare you to do Kingdom things and proclaim Jesus until He returns. Consider hosting a feast with friends, spending some time reading a passage from Scripture and using some bread and a cup of grape juice to remember the Last Supper.

Prayer Theme: Drink kingdom

You may know of people getting drunk on a regular basis. Combat harmful partying tendencies by personally drinking in God's Kingdom and praying for others will do the same.

Discussion Questions

1. If you have fasted before, share about your experience.
2. What does it mean to you that Jesus is fasting until His return?
3. How can you be a life-giving resource to people you know are caught up in a destructive party scene?
4. Have you ever thought about throwing a Kingdom party? What would you have to drink?

14. Heal

Luke 9:2 (NASB)

And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.

Activity 1:

One of the things Jesus sent His disciples out to do while proclaiming the kingdom of God was to heal hurting people in His name. You may be in need of healing in some way or have family and friends who need healing. Pray for them. Pray BIG. God does heal. However, in the broken world we live in, healing does not always occur. It often does not. This is a mystery. Participate in the mystery by praying for God's miraculous healing and see what Kingdom things God might want to do through you. Love others, trust Jesus, and be bold.

2 Corinthians 12:7 (NASB)

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!

Activity 2:

When God does not heal, it hurts. Living with that hurt—whether it be physical, emotional, spiritual, or all the above—is very difficult. You can trust that Jesus will ultimately heal all things. In the meantime, you can allow the lack of healing to hurt you even more, or you can use it to continually shape your faith and dependence on God. That's what the apostle Paul does with his thorn in the flesh. If you suffer from lack of healing in some way and have not had it out with God about the situation, then it's about time to do so. God's Kingdom can come in both healing and hurt.

Prayer Theme: Heal hurt

Everyone hurts in some way. People who seem the most confident can be dealing with the most excruciating pain. Pray for healing in the name of Jesus with wild abandon.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever seen someone be healed instantly or something similar?
2. Are there people in your life for whom you have been praying for healing without effect? Share about how you are wrestling with that.
3. Do you have any hurts in your life you would like to share?
4. How have you seen prayer for healing have a different outcome than anticipated?

15. Add

Luke 12:31 (NASB)

But seek His Kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

Activity 1:

Lives are forever changed when one seeks God's Kingdom first. Reordering your priorities as you focus on your relationship with Jesus has a wide range of effects, including impacting how you relate to others, others relate to you, and the course of your life. Take time to write down benefits you have noticed in your life that result from seeking God's Kingdom first and doing Kingdom things. Observe and be encouraged by how much you get out of following Jesus, and be grateful. A grateful attitude can lead to doing even more Kingdom things.

Hebrews 11:6 (NASB)

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Activity 2:

As a result of your faith in Jesus and commitment to doing Kingdom things, you have many benefits and rewards. Reflecting on what your life would be like without Jesus can be a sobering reminder of the transformational power of faith in Jesus. Some people grow up in the Church and follow Jesus all their lives. Others start their journey with Jesus later in life. Contact an older person in your church who has not served Jesus his or her entire life and ask if you can interview him or her about the difference the presence of Jesus has made in his or her life.

Prayer Theme: Kingdom adding

Contribute to the expansion of the kingdom of God by praying these hopeful words throughout all your activities. Pay attention to when God wants you to jump in and act on the prayer.

Discussion Questions

1. What has Jesus added to your life spiritually because of your faith in Him?
2. Use one word to describe what the consequences of subtracting faith in Jesus from your life would look like.
3. Can you identify any real-life benefits Jesus has added to your life because you are seeking His Kingdom first?
4. Which church member would you like to interview to learn more about his or her journey with Jesus?

16. Here

Luke 17:21 (NASB)

...nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or, "There it is!" For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.

Activity 1:

Jesus' presence on earth as the Son of God is the embodiment of the kingdom of God. His resurrection releases into our reality God's Kingdom, crashing in on time and space. As a follower of Jesus, you are to actively engage the reality of Jesus' Kingdom coming, both now and in the future, but many different things can distract from the truth of God's Kingdom among us. Visualize Jesus as already being present everywhere you go and listen for Him to guide you in how you can join what God is already doing.

2 Peter 3:13 (NASB)

But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Activity 2:

Even with Jesus' invitation to see the Kingdom among us and in us, you realize that it has not fully arrived. He promises a new heaven and earth, where all things are made right. Believers in Jesus, called out as His church, are to be available for God to use as He brings about His Kingdom now—and not get in the way. Discover a way that your church can partner with your school to help kids who may need everyday items (e.g., food, clothing, supplies, or transportation) and be the Kingdom in your school.

Prayer Theme: Kingdom here

The King of all creation wants you to represent Him in the world today. Use these words to remind you that Jesus is already present and that your role is to come alongside His work in progress.

Discussion Questions

1. Is it easy or difficult for you to think about God already being present everywhere?
2. When you think about the kingdom of God, what images come to mind?
3. What are some ways you know you could probably help others through your school?
4. How does believing that Jesus' Kingdom is already present in you differ from thinking about Jesus' Kingdom as being outside of you?

17. Sacrifice

Luke 18:28-30 (NASB)

Peter said, “Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You.” And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Activity 1:

Following Jesus and doing Kingdom things can result in causing rifts with family members. If you have rocky relationships with anyone in your family or with friends because of your decision to follow Christ, you are in good company with Jesus’ original disciples. Giving up comfortable surroundings, conveniences, or commodities to follow the Kingdom call is common for the children of pastors, missionaries, or other ministry leaders. If you know someone who fits this description (even if you are one yourself), encourage them today with a text, email, message, or meme.

2 Corinthians 11:25 (NASB)

Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

Activity 2:

The persecuted church around the world is gaining recognition beyond missionary stories. These people have sacrificed much for their decision to follow Jesus and do Kingdom things, including parting with possessions and loved ones, suffering torture, and even laying down their lives as a witness for Christ. Search online for an organization that serves the persecuted church, read a story of someone’s real-life, present-day struggles, and pray for that person’s deliverance. (The Voice of the Martyrs—www.persecution.com—is a good place to start.)

Prayer Theme: Kingdom’s sake

You may be experiencing God directing you to sacrifice something or recognizing that you have sacrificed something or someone for God’s Kingdom. Use this prayer to remind you of your reason: Jesus’ Kingdom coming!

Discussion Questions

1. What is the biggest sacrifice you have had to make in following Jesus?
2. Do you know anyone who has been persecuted for their faith?
3. How might living in a country where Christianity is illegal change your faith?
4. Is there anything in your life that you believe Jesus is asking you to sacrifice in order to do Kingdom things?

18. Near

Luke 21:31 (NASB)

So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.

Activity 1:

Watch for God's Kingdom coming near. Don't do it in boredom, like watching paint dry or a garden grow; do it with excited anticipation. Believing that Jesus is already present and at work in the world affords you the luxury of waiting on God and watching as He actively pursues those around you. As you choose to be tuned in to God's desires for you, God may trust you with insight into when others are drawing close to God's Kingdom and give you a role in their rebirth in Christ. Do Kingdom things by asking Jesus to make you sensitive to when others are close to placing their trust in Him; be open to how God wants to use you.

James 4:8 (NASB)

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Activity 2:

Having someone to remind you to draw close to God--and someone you can remind in return--is a great way to practice accountability and growth with another Christ follower. Choose a friend to commit to pray with you daily at 4:08 PM; you each should be praying for each other. Set an alarm or reminder and text your friend. If you are ever up at 4:08 AM, pray at that time as well (but maybe skip the reminder text).

Prayer Theme: Draw near

Use these simple words to prepare your heart to dwell in and rely on the proximity of Jesus's presence to you and all whom you encounter.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been a part of someone coming to faith in Jesus? Share the story.
2. Do you have an accountability partner who can remind you to draw near to God?
3. How do you draw near to God? What kinds of activities help you?
4. What is the biggest thing that prevents you from spending time with God?

19. Birth

John 3:3 (NASB)

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Activity 1:

Remembering your own physical birth would be a traumatic experience. Remembering when you were born again, however, is a terrific one! If you have never shared the story of how you came to be a follower of Jesus, then this activity will help. Take some time this week to write out your story. Read over it a few times. Ask a close family member or friend if you can read it aloud. Be prepared to be asked to share your story with your youth group, church, camp, retreat, or on the next mission trip. Condense your story into a thirty-second blurb just in case someone asks you. You never know with whom Jesus will trust you to share.

1 Peter 3:15 (NASB)

...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

Activity 2:

After you complete the first activity, you will be ready to share your story any time God provides an opportunity. Sharing is not forcing. Wait on God. Another way to share the story of your birth in Christ is through baptism. Jesus spoke in John 3 of being born of water and the spirit. Going under the water symbolizes dying to self and sin, and coming out of the water symbolizes being raised to new life in Christ. This is one of the most beautiful and profound Kingdom activities. If you have been baptized already, live into it this week by sprinkling yourself with a little water each day as you choose to cooperate with God's grace. If you have not been baptized, talk to a church leader about experiencing this special sacrament.

Prayer Theme: Born again

This term is one of the many Jesus uses to describe entering the kingdom of God and placing faith in Him. Be reminded of your birth in Christ today, and pray for others to come to faith in Jesus and participate in His Kingdom.

Discussion Questions

1. Tell your story of coming to faith in Christ.
2. Why do you think Jesus uses the term *born again* when saying faith in Christ is a requirement to see God's Kingdom?
3. Have you ever known someone who went to church faithfully but never really believed or was transformed by Jesus?
4. If you have been baptized, share what the experience meant for you then as well as what it means for you today.

20. Truth

John 18:36 (NASB)

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”

Activity 1:

God often does not do things the way we think He should do them. If we were God, we would do things totally different. (Thank goodness we are not!) Humanity wants God to overpower; instead, Jesus offered Himself up on the cross. Through God’s mysterious grace, Jesus conquered all other powers and authority through this selfless act of laying down His life. When you find yourself wanting to respond from a place of power, do the Kingdom thing instead, and be a servant of Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to work through your weakness and forgive.

Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Activity 2:

It is too easy to allow other people to become the enemy. Even when it seems this way on the surface, we are taught that, in Christ, they are not. These people are at war within themselves over whom to serve—God or self. This was the first sin and continues to be the root of all sin. Have compassion for those who position themselves as your enemies. They may be in your church, school, home, or extracurricular activities. Pray for God to give you a creative alternative solution beyond the options of being victor or victim, and live the *veritas* (truth) of your faith in Jesus by praying for your enemies.

Prayer Theme: *Veritas*

Latin for truth, this word can be your rally cry as you pray for Jesus’s truth to prevail in you, through you, and around you.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between how Jesus talked about kingdom and what we think about kingdom?
2. Can you think of a way to show love to your enemies?
3. How do you even begin to pray for your enemies?
4. Why would Jesus choose to demonstrate God’s power through weakness instead of overwhelming force?

21. Courage

Acts 1:3 (NASB)

To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Activity 1:

Living in a world which does not do Kingdom things or think Kingdom thoughts can be discouraging. You can get to a point where you even wonder if it is worth following Jesus. The disciples must have felt that way after Jesus had been crucified and entombed. Even after the resurrection they struggled to believe. Jesus appeared to them and talked about Kingdom things, things that matter and make a difference. When you get discouraged, compare your circumstances to the promise, length, and light of eternity. Allow Jesus' presence to swallow those problems whole.

Romans 8:38-39 (NASB)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Activity 2:

When you are doing Kingdom things, living in Kingdom ways, and hanging out with other Kingdom citizens, you are well resourced to overcome discouragement, remembering nothing can separate you from the love of God. You may have friends or family who do not share your faith. Find a way to encourage them—not in a preachy way, but in a way that is meaningful to them. If you want to get really crazy, find a secret way to encourage a teacher at school, showing how much you appreciate his or her efforts and investment in you.

Prayer Theme: Kingdom courage

If you are facing anything that discourages you or notice others who need encouragement, mentally repeating this phrase throughout the day can help prepare your heart and mind for action.

Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything that has been discouraging you lately?
2. What do you do when you realize you are discouraged?
3. In what ways do you practice Jesus' presence in order to be encouraged?
4. Do you tend to be someone who says and does things that are encouraging or discouraging to those around you?

22. Struggle

Acts 14:22 (NASB)

...strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

Activity 1:

Believing in Jesus is not the ultimate plan for avoiding all hassles in life. Being a disciple of Jesus and doing Kingdom things is full of struggle. We struggle with ourselves, with others, and with God in various ways over time. Instead of viewing all the struggles we face as seasons to get through or avoid, we could embrace those times, thinking of the challenges as weightlifting for the soul. These times strengthen our resolve to do Kingdom things. Choose to see struggle and doubt as natural, normal, and a way to grow into being a Kingdom dweller.

Matthew 19:24 (NASB)

"Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Activity 2:

The disciples figured that if "having it all" was not a sure sign of someone being Kingdom dweller, then what chance did they have of achieving God's favor? Jesus flipped the script and revealed that wealth can actually get in the way of doing Kingdom things. Money can be the last thing a believer surrenders to God's control. Trust God with your finances and begin giving to your local church. Pray. Begin to give an amount that makes sense for you now, and work up to 10 percent. Really, it is the least you can contribute for Kingdom use.

Prayer Theme: Strength in struggle

There is not a bad time to pray this prayer. Through the struggles of faith and living you may be going through, let Jesus strengthen your faith as you participate in His Kingdom.

Discussion Questions

1. What struggles have you experienced since committing to follow Jesus?
2. How can these struggles be a way to strengthen your faith in God?
3. Has acknowledging that your money belongs first to God ever been an issue for you?
4. Why do you think Jesus teaches that riches can make it difficult to enter the Kingdom?

23. Tradition

Acts 28:23 (NASB)

When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.

Activity 1:

Tradition is a vital part of faith. Followers of Jesus participate in an ancient, vibrant, and messy story of God's relationship with humanity. Gaining some understanding of your church's faith tradition, whence it comes, and how it ties into the greater history of Christianity will help you establish a firmer foundation of understanding as you read Scripture, develop your appreciation of Christians from other denominations, and inspire you as you contemplate how you can contribute to doing Kingdom things. Schedule an appointment with your pastor and ask him a heap of questions!

Mark 9:40 (NASB)

For he who is not against us is for us.

Activity 2:

Explore how vast the kingdom of God is by visiting another church with different traditions. If you are accustomed to a more informal faith community, visit a church with a ritual-rich worship setting. Appreciate the beauty, diversity, and common bonds of faith, experience, and expression that bind the universal Church together.

Prayer Theme: Unity in Jesus

You are likely surrounded by many fellow believers in Jesus daily—some of whom you are aware and some you are not. Remember these words and pray for the Spirit to connect and encourage you all together.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you know about your church, its origins, and what it believes?
2. How could Paul use the Old Testament to teach about Jesus and His Kingdom?
3. Where have you worshiped with Christians besides in your own church setting?
4. Can you think of some questions you have about other Christian traditions?

24. Tangent

Romans 14:17 (NASB)

...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Activity 1:

Being distracted from the most important realities of following Jesus is a real danger. Tangents of tradition, activities, opinions, and influence can keep you from focusing on Kingdom priorities. If you find that your relationship with Jesus is being robbed of rightness, joy, or peace, it may be that your attention is off of Jesus and on a tangent. Combat the absence of these spiritual realities by simplifying your faith to a singular focus on Jesus.

Revelation 3:15-16 (NASB)

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”

Activity 2:

Focusing on Jesus as your first love creates in you the touchable and tangible realities of joy and peace that others can experience. In the midst of doing Kingdom things, don't lose sight of the ultimate goal of sharing hope in Jesus through every means possible. As a Kingdom dweller infused with the Holy Spirit and love, you are meant to be a refreshing stream of cool water for the spiritually dehydrated and a healing pool of health for those stuck in the disease of sin. Check your spiritual temperature by seeing if people notice something different about you; then point them to Jesus!

Prayer Theme: Hot and cold

The intention of repeating this phrase is to grow in you the desire for Christ to be a refreshing or healing presence through you in all situations.

Discussion Questions

1. Do people notice something different about you and ask you why?
2. If they do not, why do you think that is?
3. Are there any church activities that distract you from the goal of relationship with Jesus?
4. When do you most often experience Jesus' joy and peace?

25. Power

1 Corinthians 4:20 (NASB)

For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

Activity 1:

Christian faith can be overrun with words and speaking. The power of Jesus is not only evidenced in listening to amazing talks or gorging on spiritual books. A transformed life is the most compelling proof of God's Kingdom-come power. Overdependence on sermons, sagas, and even Scripture in place of a dynamic relationship with Jesus saps the power of His presence in our lives. Spend some time each day this week in silence and prayer. Plug into the raw power of Jesus' presence.

Luke 5:16 (NASB)

But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

Activity 2:

If it is difficult for you to cultivate time alone with God and spend time in silent prayer at home, then shake up your routine. Jesus Himself would sneak away in the early morning or late at night to pray. Something special happens in you when you sneak away just to be with Jesus. This consecrated time helps prepare you to cooperate with God's grace in doing Kingdom things with the creativity of Jesus' Spirit. Go to a park, hill, rock, river, bridge, attic, or cave, and enjoy time alone with Him!

Prayer Theme: Slip away

Thinking about it will help. Praying about it will compel you to prioritize slipping away during the day to simply be with Jesus. Relax in His power and presence.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel when you are off by yourself?
2. What important things do you imagine Jesus learned about God and His own identity when He purposely isolated Himself prayer?
3. Where is the most interesting place you have spent time alone with God?
4. Can you think of ways it would change your perspective on being alone if, each time you felt lonely, you prayed?

26. Renew

Colossians 4:11 (NASB)

...and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.

Activity 1:

Paul worked with all kinds of people during his Kingdom adventures. Many were devout Jews who came to recognize Jesus as their King. For many generations, the Hebrew people had been set apart by God to be a blessing to the nations. But the Jews sometimes mistook their closeness with God as the end goal and did not focus on sharing God's hope with the world. You may have people in your church who have been serving God a long time yet you wonder if they really know Jesus, and if they do, why they do not show it in their actions, attitudes, or faces! Do a Kingdom thing and go out of your way to show God's love to someone through encouragement. Wait and see what renewing things happen.

Galatians 6:15 (NASB)

For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Activity 2:

God's Kingdom is all about new creation. When you follow Jesus, you are marked by His death and resurrection. With a life cleansed by the power of the Holy Spirit, you begin to participate in the coming Kingdom of a new creation. When Jesus rose from the dead, this new creation was initiated. Nothing you do, say, wear, or other way by which you distinguish yourself means anything unless you are doing Kingdom things from a heart purified by the Spirit of Jesus, who is recreating you and all creation. Doing Kingdom things starts with you becoming a part of this new creation. Ask Jesus how He wants to recreate you today. Get some clay or putty and pray the short prayer phrase. Listen to how Jesus directs your thoughts and actions.

Prayer Theme: Renew me

The change we want to see in others begins in our own hearts. A small step of participation with God's new creation can be continual with this simple prayer.

Discussion Questions

1. Can you picture some seemingly-grumpy people in your church you'd like to encourage?
2. What are some renewing ways you can encourage life and new creation in those around you?
3. Do you have the sense God has set you apart for a particular role for you to contribute to the Kingdom coming?
4. How does embracing the belief that Jesus is in the midst of making everything new right now shift your perspective on the world?

27. Call

1 Thessalonians 2:12 (NASB)

...so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Activity 1:

Some people have a sense that God has called them to do specific things. Others are able to follow what God puts in their hearts as they live out their lives following Jesus. Whether a person has a vocational (*voci* = voice) calling or is “just working to pay the bills,” he or she is to bring glory to God’s Kingdom through their work. Whatever kind of work you do—part-time, during the summer, on weekends, evenings, or every once in a while—how you go about your tasks is an expression of your calling to be a disciple of Jesus. Whatever you do, do it with a Kingdom attitude!

Luke 14:27-28 (NASB)

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

Activity 2:

When you answer Jesus’ call to be His disciple, you need to count the cost. It will affect how you work and what you do with your life. Understand that when you choose to do Kingdom things and follow Jesus, it is going to cost you. Try carrying your hard-copy Bible with you to school or reading it openly and see what it costs you. Maybe nothing. Maybe everything. Maybe a Kingdom conversation will emerge. Remember the cost of discipleship.

Prayer Theme: Kingdom call

Pray for Kingdom come and for a Kingdom calling. As you meditate on these words, notice if the Holy Spirit brings any type of work or lifelong calling to your attention for you to pursue.

Discussion Questions

1. What has been the cost of your discipleship in following Jesus?
2. How does carrying the cross of Jesus affect your life?
3. Have you ever carried your Bible to school and had someone react to it?
4. Do you have the sense that Jesus is placing a specific calling on your life?

28. Shaky

Hebrews 12:28 (NASB)

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe.

Activity 1:

The Kingdom things you do cooperate with and contribute to God's reign; Jesus' death and resurrection sealed this victory. Even when you are shaking in our boots, God's Kingdom is not. Faith in Christ can stabilize you when every else around is freaking out. Illness, injury, loss, death, and opposition are examples of things that can shake a person up. If you know someone going through any of these shaking times right now, offer that person the stability of Jesus by listening—and offering your presence more than your conversation. God's reverence and awe will be available in those Kingdom moments.

John 20:27 (NASB)

Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Activity 2:

Everyone has doubts. Doubting does not separate you from God, just like temptation is not sin. Trying to resolve those difficulties without God and Christian community is when you get into real trouble and become isolated. Jesus is not afraid of your doubts. Jesus invites Thomas to come closer with his doubt. This is our invitation, too. Do Kingdom things by being open with your doubts about God with someone whom you know you can trust and who will be real with you. Doubts can also be a transparent way to share your faith with someone who might respect your willingness to be real about your questions.

Prayer Theme: Shake it up

Your openness with Jesus to be shaken up can strengthen you for complete dependence on His Spirit.

Discussion Questions

1. When have you gone through times of being shaken, and how have you been comforted?
2. How can having our faith shaken actually serve to increase our trust in Christ?
3. What doubts about God and spiritual things do you find yourself considering?
4. Can you think of some helpful steps to take the next time your faith is being shaken or you experience doubt?

29. Backward

James 2:5 (NASB)

Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

Activity 1:

When we do Kingdom things--like putting other people before yourself, choosing a good attitude when a bad one is justified, forgiving when it is undeserved, etc.--it may look backward to others. Whatever group of people is normal for you to hang out with, choose to make friends with new people whom your group may not regularly be around. The point is not to abandon your friends but to expand your Kingdom-come mindset and surprise those around you with an adventuresome spirit.

Luke 13:30 (NASB)

And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.

Activity 2:

Cutting in line is one of the most annoying things. When someone takes a place he or she does not deserve, everyone knows it. This matters in big and small things. Look for ways to express the Kingdom practice of the first being last. This is the backwardness of being a disciple of Jesus. Call shotgun the next time you are going somewhere in a car then give someone else the seat. God often surprises everyone with His choices of whom to include and how He determines proper placement of persons.

Prayer Theme: Last first

As you are reflecting on this backward quality of God's kingdom, watch how many different situations apply. Every time it applies and you have influence, let the last be first.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think about people who cut in line? Have you ever done it?
2. How do you think people will respond to allowing the last to go first?
3. If the first are last and the last are first, what happens to those in the middle?
4. In what ways would the world be completely different if we embraced this backward way of living?

30. Overlap

Revelation 11:15 (NASB)

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

Activity 1:

The kingdom of God can seem so far removed from the kingdom of the world. The overlap between the two was accomplished in Jesus being fully God and fully man. When you pray for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as in heaven, you are speaking into reality the hope God desires our lives to project. Snap some pictures this week of times you notice the beauty of God and post them online with scriptures that proclaim God's greatness.

Luke 11:2 (NASB)

And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.'"

Activity 2:

One of the many ways God's kingdom overlaps with the kingdom of the world is in serving others selflessly. While the kingdom of God is slowly consuming all competing powers, we can stimulate *kingdom come* through selfless acts that are inspired by our relationship with Jesus and the needs of others. Discover how you can serve a neighbor and bring on a little *kingdom come*.

Prayer Theme: Heaven on earth

God will fully establish the heavenly kingdom on earth and make all things new. Until then we can continue to pray this prayer of God's goodness breaking through into our reality.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways can you see heaven breaking into the reality of earth?
2. What would heaven on earth look like if you were to design it?
3. How can you allow a little bit of God's kingdom to be revealed through your life?
4. Share some of the kingdom things you have come up with to set loose *kingdom come* in your neighborhood.

31. Frenemy

Luke 6:27-29 (NASB)

But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.

Activity 1:

Experimenting with creative ways to love your enemies is one of the most effective ways to do Kingdom things. Loving your enemies is so counterintuitive that you cannot help but be transformed by the process. Leave the results this love has in others' lives up to God. Want to obey Christ's directive to love your enemies but don't know where to begin? Start with prayer. Pray for Jesus' transforming blessing, peace, and joy on those whom you consider enemies. This might be someone you know personally, an organization, a people group, etc. As you pray, allow the Holy Spirit to shift your imagination from seeing an enemy to seeing someone created and loved by God.

Romans 12:20 (NASB)

But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.

Activity 2:

Praying for a frenemy is not easy. Acting on this shift can reveal further resistance in yourself. The next time someone wrongs you, bless that person. If something is stolen, give up your spare as well. Share your resources and offer help with no agenda. When you lean into God's kingdom reign in this way, you are replacing vengeance with a gift of grace. Working toward the well-being of an enemy upsets the status quo. God will use this action to proclaim and further His Kingdom in surprising ways.

Prayer Theme: Do not withhold

This prayer creates opportunity for your life to be changed and for God's kingdom activity to come rushing in as you discover creative ways to love those who feel like enemies.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the emotions you experience when you consider loving an enemy.
2. What does the term *frenemy* mean to you?
3. How can finding ways to love enemies bring into reality God's kingdom reign?
4. If someone you thought did not like you suddenly did something kind toward you, what thoughts and feelings would you have?

32. Us

Luke 6:31-33 (NASB)

Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

Activity 1:

The love of God invites transformation. Loving those you are not naturally drawn to moves you from an “us-and-them” mentality to the realization that, through Christ, everyone is a part of *us*. When you love all in this way, you are doing Kingdom things. Buy lunch or something to drink for someone you find difficult it to be around. Do it secretly. Whatever place they frequent for food, talk to the management about covering their next purchase.

1 John 1:9 (NASB)

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Activity 2:

Jesus did not just die and rise from the dead for all of us; in addition, through the Holy Spirit's power in us, He cleanses us from all sin. The catch is confession. Acting right with God does not mean you *are* right with God. Confession of your sins, mistakes, and shortcomings releases you to live more fully and enables you to do Kingdom things. Consider whether you have something you need to confess today and share this confession with someone you trust. Remember that confession isn't about feeling guilty. It's about admitting that, without God, you fall short of the holiness you desire to attain. God doesn't wish for confession to shame you or make you feel that being a Christian is nice in theory but impossible in practice. The practice of confession will set you free in your relationship with Jesus and will help you live transparently with all the rest of the world. If it doesn't, then consider finding some new, more gracious mentors with whom to practice confession.

Prayer Theme: Treat others

Keep this phrase foremost in your thoughts today, remembering God's posture toward you and acting on this prayer in how you treat others. Not for kudos but for Christ!

Discussion Questions

1. Who are the people or groups you place in your "us" box?
2. Are you willing to confess whom you place in your "them" box?
3. What are some ways you have been treated well by someone you thought hated you?
4. Can you come up with some ways to treat others the way you'd like to be treated?

33. Mercy

Luke 6:36 (NASB)

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Activity 1:

Mercy is when you do not get a consequence you deserve. It is when you should be punished but some authority figure chooses not to enact the punishment you deserve. Mercy can be instinctive for us to request, but we are often reluctant to give it to others or to witness others receiving it. Jesus invites us to do Kingdom things by extending mercy like His Father. Mercy and accountability ought to be held together in order for us to grow, but if we never receive mercy for ourselves, our hearts will harden. Likewise, if we never give mercy or allow others to receive mercy in peace, our hearts harden, and we no longer reflect a key component of the image of God. Demonstrate mercy in every conceivable way today. That's what God does for you.

1 Timothy 1:13 (NASB)

...even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.

Activity 2:

When those who have not experienced God's merciful love withhold mercy themselves, do not judge them too harshly. If you have knowingly received God's mercy, however, you have no excuse. God constantly grants us mercy in our ignorance. Considering our small brains and God's infinite wisdom, imagine how much mercy He lavishes on us every day. Jesus' prayer on the cross, petitioning His Father to forgive "because they know not what they do," always applies! Commit to mercy as a lifestyle, not an occasional afterthought.

Prayer Theme: Have mercy

Pronounce the reality of God's love toward you and through you to others in merciful actions. Focusing thus on Christ's love and mercy will prepare you for Kingdom initiation and conversation.

Discussion Questions

1. Share a story of a time in your life when someone extended mercy to you.
2. How does God show us mercy on a continual basis?
3. What are tangible ways that God's kingdom breaks into our reality through expressions of mercy?
4. Why has God chosen mercy through Christ as a way to love us?

34. Measure Up

Luke 6:38 (NASB)

Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.

Activity 1:

It is far too easy to be tempted to rate your success in living out the kingdom of God through relationship with Jesus by comparing yourself to other people. Some find it easier to compare and feel better about themselves. For others, it is easier to compare and feel bad. Neither of these choices measures up to the hope you have in Christ and the measure by which He qualifies you. You are measured by grace. This is a benefit of relationship with Jesus that you do not deserve! You are doing Kingdom things when you are gracious toward yourself and others. Whichever one is more difficult for you to do, measure that way today. Be kind to yourself. Be kind to others. Measure up! Share in Jesus' kingdom of kindness that transforms.

Ephesians 4:7 (NASB)

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Activity 2:

In His grace, Jesus measures us all for how we are to uniquely contribute to the body of Christ (Church), the world, and His Kingdom breaking loose in both. You are not supposed to be someone else. You are supposed to be who Jesus is recreating you to be in His image. His grace has been given to you for you to be you. When you try to be somebody else, you will never measure up. Do Kingdom things by giving yourself tasks in your church and community for which you know you are created, that others affirm, and that God has given for you to develop further through His grace.

Prayer Theme: Measure up

Graciousness is a contagious attribute when practiced with truth and sincerity. Being gracious means calling out the best in others. Today, measure others (or yourself, if that is an area where you struggle) higher than may be deserved by praying Jesus' grace over them.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you measure yourself or others more harshly? What's your default mode?
2. Can you remember a time when someone was gracious toward you?
3. When you are treated with kindness and grace, what effect does it have on you?
4. What does it mean to be measured by the grace of God through relationship with Jesus?

35. Train

Luke 6:40 (NASB)

A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.

Activity 1:

Getting good at doing Kingdom things comes with training. Submit yourself to be disciplined by and learn from your teachers, mentors, and leaders, and follow Jesus just as the first disciples followed Him. The truth and message of Jesus never changes, but the ways you train and share along the way might. Your training in Kingdom things is going well when--like Jesus--you are able to point out examples of God's truths lived out in church and culture using story and imagery. Listen to some music or watch a movie, and practice looking for the spiritual truths revealed in Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16 (NASB)

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

Activity 2:

You may be a person who finds it is easier to do Kingdom things with your church. You might also be a person who finds it easier to do Kingdom things when away from church people. Either way, both are necessary for your training in doing Kingdom things. This week invite a friend to do something with you and your church. Also invite a friend to do something outside the church setting. Watch to see during which situation you find yourself more readily aware of God's presence. Train yourself to see the world and Church as Jesus did—as all part of God's kingdom and under His reign.

Prayer Theme: God train

Get on the God train and ride! God's spirit is neither limited to the Church nor barred from the world's activity. Be mindful of God's presence sustaining all things, and ride in God's grace as you acknowledge the present reign of God in you and around you.

Discussion Questions

1. What type of training have you received or are you receiving as a follower of Jesus?
2. Whom are you allowing to disciple you in your faith?
3. Whom are you discipling and training as a follower of Jesus?
4. Where do you notice the truth of God in the culture around you?

36. Grow

Luke 6:43-44 (NASB)

For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush.

Activity 1:

Pay attention to how you are growing and the fruit of your life in Christ as you do Kingdom things. If you are doing lots of things for God but not in the power and dependence of Jesus' Spirit, then the fruit being produced from your life may not be very tasty. You can tell which people in your life are really growing in God by the fruit their lives yield. Others are drawn to them because of Jesus. The same can be true in your life. Reflect on the past week and write down times you can identify the "good" or "bad" fruit from the tree of your life.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Activity 2:

When a tree is not growing properly, no fruit shows up. As you reflect on areas of your life that produce Kingdom fruit, do something to will both help the environment and serve as a reminder to dedicate yourself to spiritual growth: plant a fruit tree. Take care of the tree as you tend to your own spiritual growth, and when the tree produces fruit, share it with others. Focus on practicing the characteristics identified as the fruit of the Spirit—especially those which are hardest for you—and be patient with yourself as God grows you in the soil of His grace to do Kingdom things!

Prayer Theme: Good fruit

As you follow Jesus and do Kingdom things, He will produce good fruit in you. Allow this prayer theme to focus your heart and mind on cultivating spiritual growth and guide your choices as you grow in Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of fruit do you think your life is producing for others to see and taste?
2. What are some specific things you intentionally do to grow in Christ's Spirit and to allow good fruit to be produced in you?
3. Which part of the fruit of the Spirit most often rots in your life?
4. Name some ways you have experienced the fruit of the Spirit through others' lives in Christ.

37. Salty

Matthew 5:13 (NASB)

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

Activity 1:

Salt is meant to be used as a seasoning that brings out flavor. You do Kingdom things when you allow God to use you to liven up situations with His hope. No matter the occasion, whether you want to be there or not, you can choose to be the salty character that brings the best out of everyone and everything. When you choose not to live as a salty person, you are just dirt with a face. Flavor someone's life with a big surprise--arrange a party, give a gift, and/or do the unexpected. Live into the hope you have in Jesus by allowing Him to sprinkle your life over relationships that need Kingdom flavor.

Colossians 4:6 (NASB)

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Activity 2:

Some foods are sweet and some are savory. People can tell when you just want something from them if your speech is uncharacteristically sweet. When God is actually using someone to make a difference in your life with healthy and meaty conversation, you can also tell. If something is too sweet or too salty, it is ruined. Evaluate your speech and determine when you might be too sweet or too salty. Manipulation equals too sweet. Over-the-top sharing is too salty. Allow Jesus to help you find a balance so He can bring out the God flavors of relationships through you.

Prayer Theme: Add some flavor

Being a follower of Jesus is an interesting pursuit. If you cannot say this is true in your life, then maybe you are not allowing Jesus to be very interesting through you! Ask Jesus to flavor your life in Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Jesus means when He talks about His followers being the salt of the earth?
2. How could your life be used by God to bring out flavors in relationships as salt does in food?
3. Would you describe your speech as sweet, salty, or sour?
4. Can you think of some situations where God has used people you know to flavor the lives of others?

38. Shine

Matthew 5:14-16 (NASB)

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Activity 1:

We are created in the image of God, and our lives are intended to reflect God's glory. We are meant to shine! God's light can illuminate your life and serve as a beacon of hope and healing in the world. When you are traveling in the dark, a distant light shining ahead is welcome. Pick something in your home that needs to be shined up, and use your time polishing to pray about how you can better reflect the light of God.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (NASB)

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Activity 2:

When you shine out of your own ability or talents and do not credit Christ in words or attitude, your light is very dim. The creative God we serve through Christ gifts us with the Holy Spirit to reflect the face of Christ and God's light in the world. Find a way to use whatever you are good at or like doing as a way to reflect the light of Christ. God created you to shine--not for yourself but for God and His glory.

Prayer Theme: Shine

Repeat this one-word prayer as a centering practice as you focus on letting Christ's light shine through you. Don't worry about if or how others perceive this light. This is up to God's purpose and direction.

Discussion Questions

1. What are different ways that followers of Jesus shine His light in the world?
2. How can you tell when someone is reflecting Christ and when a person is shining for his or her own glory? (Can you tell?)
3. Are there creative ways Jesus has used you to shine for God's glory?
4. Why does it seem God wants to shine through our relationship with Jesus instead of directly to everyone?

39. Reconcile

Matthew 5:23-24 (NASB)

Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

Activity 1:

Making things right between yourself and a fellow believer can be a difficult act of obedience, especially if you know you are not at fault. You do Kingdom things when you initiate reconciliation. If you know there is something between you and a fellow believer, pray and seek God's wisdom. Do everything in your power to offer or ask forgiveness and clear things up. The results are up to the other person and to God, but you will know that you have done what you can to live in the peace of Christ together.

2 Corinthians 5:18 (NASB)

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

Activity 2:

Reconciliation is at the heart of doing Kingdom things. Doing your best to make things right between yourself and someone else is difficult. Seeking reconciliation between other people or groups is even more challenging. As you practice reconciliation in your personal relationships, God may invite you to help seek peace between others. This is not a place you want to go alone. If Christ moves in you to participate in the ministry of reconciliation among your family, friends, school, church, or community, do not go it alone! Seek the advice and wisdom of a Christian mentor.

Prayer Theme: Make things right

If you find yourself in a situation, this quick prayer could help ground you in the reality of God's desire to make things right between you or others. God does this. Not you. Join in what He is doing!

Discussion Questions

1. If you have ever had someone reconcile with you, how did it go?
2. What relationship(s) in your life currently need(s) reconciling?
3. When you try to make things right with someone, where do you start?
4. For you, what is the hardest part of reconciling? Words? Feelings? Trust?

40. Perfect

Matthew 5:48 (NASB)

Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Activity 1:

Christian perfection is not about being flawless. Living into the purpose for which you have been created is the goal. You can do that. To be the way God dreams for you to be, you need to be growing in loving relationship with God and with others in the world. You may fit this definition easily. Perfect! When you do Kingdom things, admit your mistakes and strive to grow in relationship with God and others in the love of Christ's Spirit.

Philippians 3:12 (NASB)

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Activity 2:

When you embrace the Christian perfection (sometimes known as holiness) Jesus invites you to, it is not a finished state of being. Perfection/holiness is the purposeful growth state of imperfect people with a perfect God of love. God loves perfectly. You cannot. You can, however, allow God's perfect love to continually fill and renew you and your relationships. If there is anything in your life preventing the perfect love of God to enable you to do Kingdom things, ask Jesus to remove it from your life by His power and perfect love. If that is where you are already, then reflect God's perfection in loving someone today in a selfless way.

Prayer Theme: Perfect love

Perfect love casts out fear and prepares you for loving with the intention and actions of Christ as you do Kingdom things. This is a continual goal you live in by growing in love.

Discussion Questions

1. What does perfection mean to you?
2. How does God define perfection differently (think holiness)?
3. Can it be possible for us to live out of the perfect love of God?
4. When God's purpose and love define perfection, how is the meaning changed?

Conclusion:

In a little over a week you'll be joining over 7000 other students and adult leaders from across North America to experience God in many ways. You might experience God through the worship and teaching in the main sessions. You might experience God in the rec hall, where you'll be able to interact with other students and leaders through fun and life-giving activities. You might also experience God through the intentional outreach of the Ministry With Others (MWO) opportunities.

Experiencing God through these and other ordinary or extraordinary ways is dependent on how open your mind, heart, and hands are to receive God. In whatever way God chooses to speak to you—through the main sessions, rec hall, MWO experience, or even in the midst of what may feel like the ordinary activity of travel and sharing meals with others attending NYC 2015—it is all part of the prayer, “Thy Kingdom come.”

As you prepare to depart your normal everyday life to embark upon what could very well be a life-changing experience, remember this: the kingdom of God is the central message of Jesus' life. His teaching, miracles, and actions all point to the Kingdom as both a present reality and a future experience. When we pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” what we are really saying is, “God, I commit to living a life that stands up for and represents Jesus to the world.”

The last 40 days have been an experiment in faithful participation in representing Jesus to the world. Your actions, words, and prayers over the last 40 days have been both sharing Jesus to the world around you and preparing you for what you will experience at NYC 2015. Your heart is likely full from the impact that the last 40 days has had on your life, yet at the same time, your heart still has room to receive more.

Between now and the time NYC 2015 officially kicks off, as often as you think of it, whisper this simple prayer:

“God, my heart is full from the last 40 days of doing Kingdom things. However, my heart still has room for more of you! Prepare my mind, heart, and hands to be open to receiving more of you and taking on more Kingdom things. Thy Kingdom come!”

We believe in you! We are counting on you! We are praying for you! See you in a few days in Louisville. Our prayers for safe travel go ahead of you.