
Disciplines of a Disciple | Kingdom Stewardship

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Introduction

Today, we're jumping back into the last two weeks in our *Disciplines of a Disciple* series. So far we've covered...

1. PRIVATE DEVOTION
2. BIBLICAL COMMUNITY
3. MISSIONAL LIVING

And **today** we're looking at...

4. KINGDOM STEWARDSHIP

Over the next two weeks we'll come to understand a biblical concept that is widely misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misapplied — what Jesus means when He speaks about the *Kingdom of God*, and how it impacts every single aspect of your life. When Jesus says, “seek first the kingdom” or “the kingdom is near” or, “if you're going to even see the *Kingdom of God*, you must be born again,” what is He talking about? In fact, Jesus had more to say about it than nearly anything else He talked about.

This concept is harder for us to grasp because we live in a representative democracy. We vote people into office that best represent the values that are most important to us — and strictly speaking of American culture, we don't have a king or a kingdom. But I want you to know what Jesus is saying when He speaks of the *Kingdom of God*, its ways, its values, and what it means for us here and now — before we begin to talk about Stewardship...next week.

Luke 6:17–26

And He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19 And all the crowd sought to touch Him, for power came out from Him and healed them all. 20 And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. 24 “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25 “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

Today...

1. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM?
2. WHO IS THE KINGDOM FOR?
3. HOW DO WE ENTER IT?

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM?

A kingdom is a place that is under the rule and reign of someone. It has its own culture, ethics, morals, cultural norms, decrees, and laws.

- In a certain way, the United States is under the rule and reign of the US Government... and there are elements of a Kingdom.
- The Bible Belt is a little kingdom. It has its own culture, customs, language, and ways.
- You have your personal kingdom, where you're in charge, you make the rules.
 - *Have you ever told your children that your family isn't a democracy? That's because your children are subjects in your kingdom, subjected to your rule and reign. And all the parents said...*

Illustration: Another helpful way to think about this is when a new head coach takes over an athletic team — the old administration is out, the new one is in. In the new administration, the new head coach has a plan, a program he's going to implement in order to help the team to win and the players to work as a team. So, he implements new training, new practices, new rhythms, and a nutrition and conditioning program. The new coach may define and measure success differently. The job of the rest of the coaching staff and all the players is to align with and adjust to the new value system and program the coach is implementing. And if they don't align or adjust, guess what happens? That player is benched, maybe traded to a different team where they are a better fit that little kingdom.

Our job, as followers of Christ, is to know and understand what this Kingdom is so we can align ourselves with King Jesus, measure success the same way He does. To live according to His value system, His training regimen, His will, His priorities, and His commands.

But there is a significant distinction here. There is a drastic difference between Jesus, and every other revolutionary that has ever lived. Jesus was a revolutionary... but He was unlike any other because every other revolutionary in history brought a revolution that was simply making tweaks and adjustments to the old kingdom. They were rearranging the furniture on the Titanic, but at the end of the day, no matter how much you rearrange the furniture, that ship is still sinking!

- Jesus, in vs 20 in our passage, is saying... *"I'm not just rearranging the furniture on the boat, I'm replacing the boat entirely. I'm not just making adjustments to the old kingdom. I'm uprooting it, I'm replacing it. I'm undoing every aspect of life in the old Kingdom, and bringing an entirely different worldview, paradigm, culture, value system, way of life."* And in Luke 6, He gives a description of what that way of life looks like.

Jesus is constantly saying the kingdom is at hand, the kingdom is near.

***That means that the Kingdom of God isn't something you enter when you die.
The entrance has been made available NOW!***

*And yet, the full culmination of the Kingdom won't come until Christ returns.
Here's what that means for us... you can be a citizen of the kingdom of God now...
but still live under the influence of the old paradigm, the old value system...*

So, let's identify the old kingdom that is being subverted, and it will help us understand the Kingdom of God with a bit more clarity than maybe we've had before.

Luke 6:24-26

“But woe to you who are **rich**, for you have received your consolation. 25 “Woe to you who are **full now**, for you shall be hungry. “Woe to you who **laugh now**, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 “Woe to you, when **all people speak well of you**, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

There are the rich, the satisfied, the successful, the popular. And each of these things represent a value — so what values do they represent?

1. Power 2. Comfort 3. Success 4. Accolade

1. **First the rich** – wealth represents power. Jesus isn’t saying wealth is bad, but if wealth is the focus of your life — it’s not about the wealth — it’s about the power that wealth brings, and you’ve already received your consolation.
2. **Secondly** — “... **you who are well fed** ...” That has to do with material comfort, nice clothes, great restaurants, beautiful home. So, you have comfort.
3. **Thirdly** — “... **you who laugh** ...” Do you know the word for laugh there? This is one of the values of this kingdom. The word for laugh is a word that means to gloat. “I won. They lost.” It’s not about enjoying life. It’s talking about pride, arrogance, boasting in your success. Beating someone else. And bragging about your lot in life compared to someone else’s.
4. **Lastly** — “... **all men speak well of you** ...” Recognition, acclaim, popularity, accolade. These are the values of the kingdom that Jesus is replacing.

Of course, you see the opposite, the things this kingdom puts down, things to avoid, things to stay away from, things the average person disdains are in verses 20–23. *What are those things?* Here’s what they are:

1. Weakness 2. Sacrifice 3. Sorrow 4. Exclusion

You’re excluded. You’re weeping. The old kingdom says, “*Live for power and comfort and success and the praise of people.*” The Kingdom of God holds weakness, sacrifice, sorrow, and exclusion as it’s values.

Doesn’t that sound lovely? Don’t you want to be a part of that Kingdom?

Look carefully in verses 24–26, and you’ll see it says that wealth, power, success, and comfort are accolades for all things that you receive now.

- If you live for success, if that’s your goal, if you live for power, if you live for personal comfort, to avoid suffering, if you live for recognition, the applause of men, *these things pay off NOW*. They give you results NOW. *And if NOW is all there is, (which many believe) of course you’ll live for all of these things... why wouldn’t you?*
- But if it’s not, which if you’re a follower of Jesus, you know this isn’t all there is — you and I are called to live according to a value system that is the absolute antithesis of the old paradigm. The reward Jesus is talking about isn’t now — *the reward isn’t a temporary one, it’s not a temporary satisfaction or a fleeting comfort, the reward is stored up and it is eternal!*

In other words, if you’re gloating now, you’ll weep then.

But if you’re weeping now, you’ll find overwhelming joy on that day.

That’s what Jesus is telling us in the Sermon on the Mount.

The prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon speaking of Napoleon said this...
“Strong battalions were the cornerstone of his empire, and though for a while he stood firm, and armies advancing against him were only like so many waves dashing against the rocks of his tremendous power—yet, after all his many wars, he was overthrown and he was said to have uttered in St. Helena that memorable speech – “My empire has passed away. I founded it upon the sword, and it is gone. Jesus Christ established an empire upon love, and it will last forever.” So it will last. When all that kings and princes can do with state-craft, and with power, shall have dissolved as frost in the sun, Christ’s kingdom must stand because it is based upon the law of love. His Person is the incarnation of love. His teachings are the doctrines of love. His precepts are the rule of love. His Spirit is the creator of love. His whole religion is saturated with love—and because of this His kingdom cannot be moved!”
~ C.H. Spurgeon

This is why Jesus tells us plainly...

Matthew 16:25

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Jesus is constantly flipping the value system of this kingdom on its head...

- *However, this doesn’t mean we live with a poverty mindset.* It doesn’t mean you needlessly inflict suffering upon yourself so that you can receive your reward in heaven one day...
- **It’s about the focus of your life now!**
It’s about the value system that you live by now!
It’s about what you're living for now!

***The Kingdom of God is not just where you go when you die.
The Kingdom of God is NOW!***

Luke 17:20-21

Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed,²¹ nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

STORY: Last week Shedankeh shared about his arrest, being tied up, and his life threatened by a man and his sons that were killing people in the name of God. He took a stand for the God He knows, a God of love... and as Shedankeh had guns pointed at him, his life hanging in the balance (*he has a wife, children to think about*) and yet, in that moment, he doesn’t beg for his life — He prays for boldness, and tells this man, “*If you kill me, you’d be doing me a favor... I know where I’m going — but if you die, not a snowballs chance in hell that you’ll make it in. So, surrender your life to Jesus Christ and be saved.*” The man looks at his sons, tell them that Shedankeh must have a couple screws loose, and releases him and soon after surrenders his life to Jesus!

- It’s so beautiful and moving... why? Because it is a perfect picture of the absolute reversal of values — it is a harrowing demonstration of what living in the kingdom of God looks like NOW! Not just then but NOW! That he would lay down his life for a man that was intent on killing Him. He had a totally different power, a completely different operating system, a new way of living that gave him enormous courage and spiritual power when he was at his weakest moment.

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon. *The Complete Works of C.H. Spurgeon, Volume 14* (Delmarva Publications, Feb 15, 2015)

Again, Jesus says, ***“My power is made perfect in weakness”***

If you know your standing in the Kingdom of God NOW, it gives you the power to love those who hate you. To pray for those who persecute you. To bless those who curse you. That’s the Kingdom of God!

- It’s not retribution. It’s forgiveness!
- It’s not retaliation, it’s grace; its mercy.
- It takes far more spiritual strength and moral fortitude to be kind and forgiving (which appears to be weakness in the eyes of the world) than it does to be vengeful, bitter, resentful... to play the victim. One way is born of the spirit, the other is born of the flesh.

If this world is all there is — then of course I’ll seek my reward now — and I won’t stand for Kingdom values because it might cost me my job, or my reputation, or even my life — I’m not going to do it.

*But if I have firm standing in the kingdom of God now, if I see my standing in heaven, that means that I can forgive. Of course, I can be kind and forgiving. Of course, I can take a stand against tyranny and injustice where I see it because — **so what if I lose my reputation? So what if I lose my job, or my life? So what if I’m ostracized? Or mocked** for being kind, gracious, and forgiving, or by standing for the values of the kingdom of God. So what if I lose my job for loving Jesus?*

- ***Who lives like that?*** Jesus did. His followers did. Thousands of believers who’ve sacrificed life and liberty for their enemies throughout history. Shedankeh... the names of Christ-followers you will never know in this life. They might not be known in this life, but these men and women are famous in heaven, and feared in hell.

Karl Marx said, “Religion is the opiate of the people.” Not a flipping chance Karl! This is the smelling salts of the people. The kingdom of God wakes you up and sets your life ablaze for the glory of God!

*“The world will not be shaken by people whose most profound thought is,
‘I’ll get to heaven someday.’”²*

~ Bill Hull

- I spent a few days with some local pastors this last week, and one of them said, *“The condition the world is in today is not the result of the depravity of the wicked, but the indifference of the faithful.”* And our indifference is the result of living under the influence of the kingdom that God wants to use us to subvert and undo.

If we’re going to see change in our world — we have to honestly assess what kingdom is dominating our values, priorities, decision making? Are we just rearranging the furniture on the Titanic, or have we stepped off that sinking ship and onto a whole new boat!?

WHO IS THE KINGDOM FOR?

Luke 6:20

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

In Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, he writes “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of God.”

² Bill Hull. *The Disciple-Making Church* (Baker Books, Jun 15, 2010)

Does that mean that the Kingdom of God is only for the poor? Not at all. But it does mean — until you recognize your own moral and spiritual poverty — until you recognize the depth of your own sinfulness and the destruction it brings into the world all around you — until you recognize that your sin isn't just about the bad things you do, but even the self-absorbed reasons for the good things that you do — you won't be poor in spirit, you won't recognize your own depravity, you won't see your need for Christ, and you won't be able to enter the kingdom.

There's a story in Luke 15... the prodigal son, who wasted His father's wealth on sinful living, and the religious older brother who was very proud of his service to His father.

In the end of the story, who entered the party? The prodigal son. The older brother chose to leave the party and was outside sulking in self-pity, bitterness, and resentment. Why? Because all those years of serving his father, he wasn't really serving His father, He was serving Himself and using the father as a means to an end. The older brother refused to humble himself, and refused to enter the party because He was blind to his own self-absorption and pride.

The Kingdom of God is for everyone.

But not everyone will enter.

The door has been flung WIDE OPEN.

But Jesus tells us that it's only the poor in spirit that receive it.

HOW DO WE ENTER IT?

John 3:2-3

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Now, when modern people hear, "born again," they have an idea of what that means — but that's not the way Jesus talks about it.

PERSONAL: Years ago, I went to one of my old friends from my pre-Jesus days, and I shared Jesus with them, what God had done in my life after I came to know Him. They looked at me with the incredulous look and asked me *"You're not one of those born-again Christians are you?"* Well, as a matter of fact, that's exactly what I am. Looking back, I could have exercised **the discipline of curiosity** and asked, *"What does that mean to you?"* But when Jesus talks about it, what is he talking about — *that we can't even see the kingdom of God without being born again!?*

In order for the Kingdom of God to make any sense to you at all, you have to be born again. There's a regeneration of your heart that must take place. We have a role to play... that role is our responsibility to repentance and faith. *To repent, turn away from sin, and believe, turn toward God.* The entirety of the Christian life is about repentance and belief. Turning away from self-absorption, self-aggrandizement, our sinful habits, behaviors and motives, and trust in God... that's our part. But what God does with that — He regenerates our hearts, we're born again... there is new life, we become new creations. He removes our heart of stone, and places within us a heart of flesh, one that is open to God, pliable, soft, ready to receive every good thing God wants to accomplish in us and through us. To delight in God and His Kingdom. *But only when we're receive the regenerative work of God in our lives can we even perceive or even begin to comprehend the Kingdom that Jesus is establishing on the earth.*

*The Charles Spurgeon conversion story is fascinating... before he was the prince of preachers, he was a disgruntled adolescent. And one day he was sitting in the pews of a church in London... and he was struggling to understand Christianity... there was a snowstorm in London and the only church he could get to was this little Methodist church. The preacher couldn't get there on time because of the storm... and one of the members of the church got up and began to preach. Spurgeon said he was such a poor preacher... all he really did was read the scripture for that day. The church member read **Isaiah 45:22** "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."*

Eventually, the man looks at young Spurgeon, and there were only a few people in the church — He looks at Spurgeon... and says, "Son, you look miserable. And you'll be miserable in life, and in death, if you don't obey my text." All of sudden Spurgeon realized he'd been looking for 50 things to do in order to be saved, when all He needed to do was to turn. To look upon Jesus. To repent, and trust, not in Himself, not in his own effort and toil, but in Christ alone, who sweat great drops of blood, who was crucified buried and resurrected, to bring us the new birth, new life, to give us the power. He realized, unless I'm born again, I can't even SEE the Kingdom of God. ³

Maybe you're here, and you need to be born again.

Maybe you've been a part of the church your entire life, but you've never entered the kingdom.

Maybe you've been trying to figure out what Christianity is all about... it's this... turn to God and be saved.

Look upon Him, His anguish, His toil for you and be saved.

Maybe you're here and you've been born again, but you've been living under the influence of the old kingdom.

You're living for power, riches, comfort, success, the applause of people.

Those things will only last for a short while... they are fleeting pleasures that will dissipate like frost in the warm sun.

God is inviting you to turn to Him.

To turn away from the ways of the old Kingdom, the values of the old way.

To live — to truly live — to Seek first the Kingdom of God.

The altar is open. If you've been living under the influence of the old paradigm, come to the altar

If you need to be born again, come to the altar

If you've been blind and you need God to give you sight... come to the altar

If you sense in your own heart a hunger more King Jesus, and His Kingdom... come to the altar

He stands ready to receive anyone and everyone who would simply repent and believe.

Discussion Questions

1. Define the "Kingdom of God" and discuss how, as a follower of Christ, you can align yourself with it.
2. What are the basic differences between the "old kingdom" of this world, and the "new kingdom" of Christ?
3. What is the difference between having a "poverty mindset," and focusing on the value system that a believer lives for now?
4. Discuss, "The world will not be shaken by people whose most profound thought is, 'I'll get to heaven someday.'" (Bill Hull).
5. Who is the kingdom for? How do you enter it?

³ Christian T. George. *The Lost Sermons of C.H. Spurgeon Volume III* (B&H Publishing Group, Jun 1, 2018)

NOTES