

# Way of Discipleship Small Groups

## Bible Themes 9: Kingdom of God.



### Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Introduction: This session is one of several on great themes that run through the Bible. In the book 'The Drama of Scripture' the authors write this: "Imagine that the Bible, with its 66 books, written by dozens of human authors over the course of more than 1000 years, is a grand cathedral with many rooms and levels and a variety of entrances....You can, for example, enter the Bible through one of the gospels....If you want to gather a sense of the cathedral as a whole, you face an important question: where is the main entrance, the place from which you can orient yourself to the whole? The cathedral of the Bible has many themes." By looking at its themes we can begin to get a sense of how to "enter" the Bible.

### Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

What does "your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven" mean?



### Understanding the information (20 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

The four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John outline a common message: Through Jesus God was completing the task of restoring His fallen world, including His people. A "gospel" means an announcement of good news – and usually news that a new King had arrived, or a victory had been won. The four "gospels" are the stories of how in Jesus the King had arrived, and that in Him the "kingdom of God" – the effective rule of God which brings wholeness and restoration is being established. (There are over a hundred uses of the term in the gospels – particularly Matthew, Mark and Luke). The world will never be the same. In the gospels Jesus' entire mission, and the purpose for which God sent Him, is to establish the Kingdom of God. He talks about God's kingdom more than anything else.



Jesus' ministry demonstrates God's kingdom rule by reversing sin and brokenness in every way - bringing wholeness (or "salvation"). Through Jesus

The kingdom means people are restored to God and one another. Jesus brings “salvation” to Zacchaeus (Luke 19), a Jew who has fallen away from God’s calling by cheating people and collaborating with Romans.

The kingdom means sickness and death is reversed. Through Jesus, God's healing power is breaking into human history to end the grip of sickness and pain. In His ministry Jesus demonstrates the reversal of death – raising Lazarus, the widow’s son and Jairus’s daughter.

The kingdom means opposing evil forces are defeated. Both Matthew and Luke show that for Jesus confrontation with evil is evidence of God’s kingdom. “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Matthew 12:28)

The kingdom means creation is in harmony. Matthew, Mark and Luke show how in being the one whom the wind and waves obey, by stilling the storm and reversing the waves of chaos, Jesus demonstrates to His disciples how in Him God’s kingdom brings peace to the whole created world.

Jesus establishes God’s Kingdom through His death and resurrection. While Jesus demonstrates God’s healing kingdom through His life, all four gospels write extensively about Jesus’ death – seeing it as the centre of His mission as God’s Messiah. It is through His dying that Jesus decisively confronts the powers of sin and evil, absorbing them into Himself and defeating them.

The gospels all emphasise His death as Jesus’ ultimate enthronement as King - with a crown, a robe, His “lifting up” – not on a throne, but on the cross and a sign that declares Him to be “King of the Jews” written in the main languages spoken by all people (Luke 23:38). Matthew emphasises how, although Jesus is rejected as Messiah by His own people, on the cross His true royal nature is disclosed.

While many found (and find) the idea of God being crucified obscene, Christians view the crucifixion through the resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection is the proof that He is God’s truly victorious Messiah whom death cannot hold. The nature of Jesus’ resurrection was unexpected – Jews were not expecting it until a “Last Day”, but Jesus rises from the dead into the present as a representative of God’s future. He is its “firstfruits” and confirmation of the ultimate “gospel – announcement of good news” - that God’s enemies have been defeated, and people and creation have been bought back.

As individual Christians we are set free through the cross and resurrection. But our restoration is within the larger story of Scripture - God’s plan to rescue all things. Jesus dies for the world. Through the victory of the Messiah the kingdom of God has come, and a renewed creation is unfolding. Jesus invites disciples to live in this new reality and anticipate its fulfilment in our daily lives.

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus had to die and rise again so that the Kingdom can come completely?

## Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Matthew 22: 1-14 in which Jesus tells a challenging parable about the Kingdom.



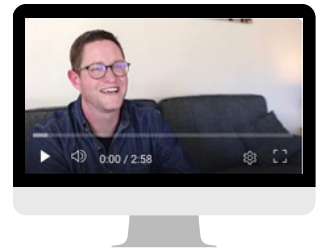
Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:  
What does this passage teach me about God?  
What does this passage teach me about people?  
How does this passage call me to obey God?  
What might I do in response to this this week?

## Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

<https://youtu.be/xer3AfeoWhA>

What struck you as important in the video?



## Optional further material and questions

Share these thoughts or read them together:

Jesus communicates the Kingdom in parables. Often parables begin with the words, “The kingdom of God is like...” (or in Matthew the kingdom of heaven, meaning ‘where God rules fully’). Parables are not just moral tales, or stories to make a point, but bring the hearer face-to-face with God’s kingdom in a way that will deepen their response to it.

The parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9) demonstrates how people respond in different ways to the coming of God’s kingdom. In some ways Jesus used parables to buy more time – to allow the true meaning of His Kingdom ministry, and His journey to the cross, to unfold, without people being able to impose other ideas or agendas onto Him. Rather than simply making a point, parables are “used to get God’s people to stop, reconsider their way of viewing reality, and to change their behaviour.” (Kyle Snodgrass). They put the ball in people’s court. In our time the Kingdom of God continues to turn the values of the world upside down. Jesus’ parables remain a source of alternative imagination for disciples - shaping us to see the world as God sees it.

Jesus ensures that God’s Kingdom will spread. He renews God’s original plan to call a people to be a “kingdom of priests”, imaging Him in the world and being a blessing to the nations. But rather than this being achieved through a nation, centred around a Temple, it will now be through a community with Him at the centre, which will draw all nations to God. Jesus calls twelve disciples to be a different kind of Israel. They will fulfil the calling of the Old Testament, not by establishing a geographical kingdom, but by accepting God’s rule, making Him their Lord and having changed hearts so that they can truly love God and love their neighbour, including their enemy.

He calls them to be with Him, become like Him, and to join in with His mission, sending them out “...to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” (Luke 9:2)

In Matthew He tells His disciples, “You are the light of the world.” (5: 14-16) They put God’s Kingdom on display. For some this means seeking the Kingdom by staying in their homes and villages. For others it means leaving everything behind. For all, it involves cost. In Mark it is the cross is the new reality which shapes the community of Jesus’ followers and calls us to live self-sacrificially. “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” (Mark 8:34)

Finally, before His ascension Jesus explicitly commissions His disciples to carry on His work. Crucially, He gives them His own authority and promises the power of His presence with them. Matthew describes the priority - Jesus’ Great Commission to go and make disciples. John offers the reassurance – the disciples are sent and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as Jesus breathes on them. Luke emphasises the task – to be witnesses. To read the gospels is not just to know about God’s kingdom, it is to be invited into being part of Jesus’ mission, taking part in the new creation He has started.

Discuss: What does it look like to be “kingdom people”?

## Responding to God’s leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, “What might God be showing me and how might I respond?” They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, “Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?”



## Group prayer (5 minutes)

I thank you, Lord God, for all the benefits you have given me  
in your Son Jesus Christ,  
my most merciful Redeemer, Friend, and Brother,  
and for all the pains and insults he has borne for me;  
and I pray that I may see Christ more clearly,  
love him more dearly,  
and follow him more nearly;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
now and forever.  
Amen





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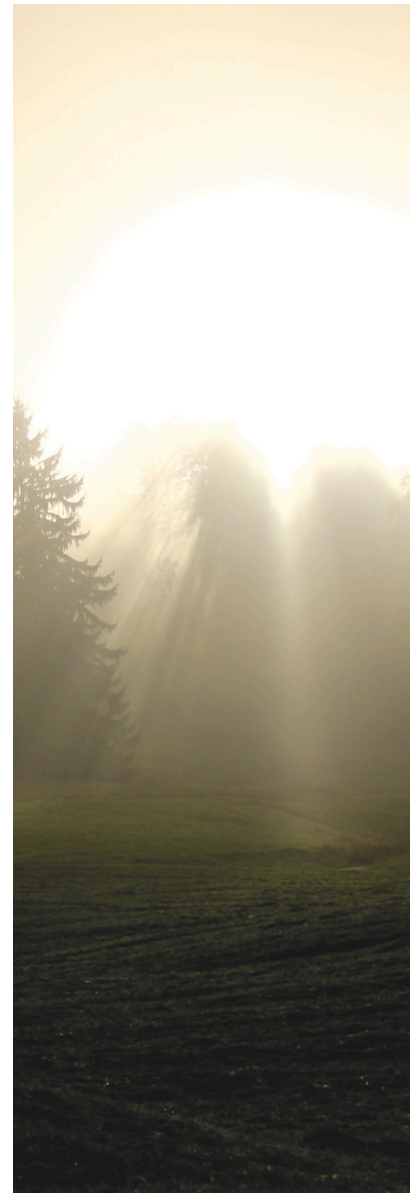
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### Additional notes:

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