Kingdom of God Part 2

Discussion guide for groups

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Two thousand years ago, Jesus walked up the side of a hill on the northwestern coast of the Sea of Galilee and gave his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew Chapters 5-7). In the middle of his message, he stopped and prayed “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

Now if you’re a first century Jew listening to this, you’ve probably got two questions at this point.

What is God’s kingdom and when is it coming?

You’re also likely wondering what God’s will is all about.

If you dig very deeply into what people have said about those questions over the years, you find out very quickly that it’s a lot. But I think the answers are really pretty simple.

**The kingdom of God is a place where God’s will is done and it comes when we serve others in love.**

And what’s just as important, we can all be a part of that kingdom. In fact, we need to be. So let’s talk about that. For starters, if the kingdom of God is a place where God’s will is done, we need to know what God’s will is. Let’s review that to make sure we all do.

**We are doing the will of God when we view and respond to the world around us using the life, ministry and message of Jesus as our lens and our compass.**

Simple enough, right? Well, it should be, but here’s the thing. Way too many of us manipulate scripture from time to time to avoid doing God’s will because it doesn’t line up with our pre-conceived view of how things should be. In other words, it’s not what the Bible actually says that matters to us. It’s what we want it to say. And this all too often leads us down the wrong road or puts us in the wrong company, sometimes at a terrible cost to ourselves and others.

As an example, we’re all familiar with the Pharisees twisted view of God’s kingdom and how they joined forces with the Romans, who they despised, to rid themselves of a common irritant - Jesus.

But it didn’t stop there.

Biblical scripture was also used to justify the institution of slavery in this country for almost 250 years until it was brought to an end by a civil war - at a cost of 600,000 American lives. This came during a time when our country was far more religious than it is today.

Scripture was distorted again during the infamous Nuremberg trials in post World War II Germany when Romans 13:1, which calls for all of us to “be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established”, was used to defend those who had participated in the genocide of millions of Jews as “good Christians” who “obeyed the authorities.”

We must be very careful today not to conflate biblical scripture and principles with personal and political agendas in a way that could separate us from God and each other. We must seek God’s will in dealing with the tough issues of our time by seeing those issues through the lens of Jesus. The good news is, God speaks to us directly through his son (Heb. 1:2) to make sure we know exactly what His will is when it comes to matters of race, gender, social justice, immigration, poverty and many other hot button issues. All we have to do is tune out the world and our own personal and political biases and listen.

As for knowing when God’s kingdom comes, most of us are aware that happens when we serve others in love. The bigger challenge is actually doing it. Sometimes our reluctance to serve is because we’re too busy or self absorbed. But more often, it’s because we don’t know how we can serve or don’t think what we’re doing really matters. Or maybe it’s because we tried serving and ended up taking on too much, getting burned out and giving up.

The truth is, when it comes to serving, it’s not what or how much we do but why we do it that matters to God (1 Pet. 4:10-11). We are His ambassadors to the world, sent to establish a colony of heaven on earth that will be a refuge and place of rest for those in need (2 Cor 5:20, Phil 3:20). There will never be a better time than right now, when things are so hard for so many people, to be the salt that preserves hope and the light that shines into the darkness of so many lives (Matthew 5:13-15).

So what’s stopping you? Go do it!

**Key Verse:** Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

**Key Message:** The kingdom of God is a place where God’s will is done and it comes when we serve others in love.

**Questions for Understanding:**

Jesus said as he was dying on the cross “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”. Forgiveness, as seen through the life of Jesus, is clearly God’s will. What’s holding you back? Are you prone to bitterness, a desire to retaliate, or self righteousness? How readily did family members forgive each other in your home growing up? How often does forgiveness happen in your own home today?

Jesus also said that we must love our enemies. How easy is it for you to seek common ground and work through differences with those whose political views are different from yours? What’s holding you back? The need to be right, to have things your way, or an unwillingness to listen and try to understand? Do you spend much time around people who are different from you or do you mostly hang out with your own tribe? What opportunities exist for you to mingle with and get to know those who see things differently from the way you see them?

**Thought Provoking Question:**

How does the following bible verse align with or change your view on wearing a mask during the Coronavirus pandemic?

**Galatians‬**

**Question for Sharing:**

A group of pastors met some years ago to discuss the pro-life movement with the late Supreme Court Justice Anthony Scalia, who was boldly and unapologetically anti-abortion. His response to their pressing him on overturning Roe v. Wade surprised them when he angrily pointed out the window and said,

“You think this court is going to solve that problem for you? This court is never going to overturn Roe in my lifetime or yours. That’s not the way this is going to get fixed. I’ll tell you how it’ll be fixed. When you go out there! Do your job and change hearts and minds! That’s when it’ll get fixed.”

How do we take justice Scalia’s advice and serve the following people in love?

Those who are unmarried, unloved and are considering having sex to fill that void.

Those same people who have gone ahead, had sex, and now have a child they are not able to care for.

Those who have had an abortion under any set of circumstances.

Note to leaders -

The Kingdom approach in all of these situations is to be pro-love.

We must love those who are unloved and considering having sex to feel loved because they are at great risk of conceiving a child and facing another set of choices that will change their life and the lives of others forever.

If a child is conceived, we must love and encourage the parents to follow through with the birth. We must also, as kingdom people, be willing to assist the parents with the challenges during the pregnancy and the challenges afterward.

If the choice is made to have an abortion, we must step in with the love of Jesus, help the parents heal, and gently guide them toward restoring or committing to a relationship with Christ that offers forgiveness and transformation.

If we are unwilling to help in some capacity, we should be silent. Condemning people in any of these situations is not loving. True love always takes sacrifice.