

SESSION 1

INDIVIDUAL STUDY GUIDE

OVERVIEW AND GOAL

Our world is both beautiful and broken. In order to bring restoration, God has implemented a big picture plan (called the Kingdom of God) for transforming human life and all creation. The journey of global discipleship begins with understanding and embracing this Kingdom plan in our lives.

KEY BIBLICAL PASSAGES

Matthew 6:9-15; John 1:1-14; Revelation 21:1-3; 22:1-5

BACKGROUND

It is God's desire that every person experience freedom and wholeness, and for this earth to be a place of justice, peace, and wholeness. Our world, however, is as broken as it is beautiful. Humans have rejected the love and direction of the Creator God. However, in his grace, God began a restoration plan. It was first introduced in the Old Testament, when he created the nation Israel who would be a light to the world in the way they lived and related to others. When Jesus came, he embodied all the hopes of Israel, and through his life, death and resurrection (which we will study more fully in the next session) God's Kingdom was established and opened to the world. Today the followers of Jesus are called to both "be" and "live" in the way that continues to spread and make real God's Kingdom intentions in our world. By entering the Kingdom story we are following the way of Jesus – the way of global discipleship.

BRIEF THEME SUMMARY

In sketching the Kingdom of God, we will touch on three core truths: 1) the deep need of God's Kingdom in our world today; 2) the certainty that the Kingdom of God will one day be fully revealed in a new heaven and new earth; and, third, that we respond with openness and participate in God's Kingdom

intentions. These three core truths require us to face the harsh realities of our broken world, embrace the unshakeable hope that God's love and Kingdom will come, and make a firm and sincere commitment to follow God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The need for God's Kingdom to come in our world is clear by what we see all around us – one out of every three people in our world experience hunger. Homelessness is evident in the richest cities and countries in our world, and corruption, crime and violence fill our newscasts on daily basis. This is not the world that God intended. He pronounced his creation as "good," but human sin and disobedience soon began the human story of brokenness and pain.

We invite you to begin your journey by reading the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-15. Note the references to "daily bread" and "forgiveness of debts". For thousands of people in Jesus' day, the struggle to pay off loans and the need for food was a daily challenge.

Why do you think Jesus would include this in this most important prayer? What does it say about God's intentions for the world?

On a sheet of paper next to the prayer, list some of the modern problems that the prayer sheds light on. Include a global problem, a problem in your own neighbourhood or community and a problem that you face in your personal life.

The Bible also teaches about the certainty of God's Kingdom, which is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ, who we will focus more directly in the next session. At this time read Isaiah 65:17-25, and then the amazing picture of the end of the age in Revelation 21:1-3; 22:1-5.

What do you see in these passages that inspires you the most? Is there anything that surprises you?

Why do you think God has provided you with a glimpse of this certain, final, future?

SERMON CONNECTION

The Preaching Guide has offered your pastor notes for a sermon based on Matthew 13:31-32, 44-45. In verses 44 and 45, Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a treasure, pearl and mustard seed. Finding the treasure and pearl brings great joy, and results in the person selling everything to purchase the treasure and pearl.

REFLECTION POINTS: Spend some time acknowledging how you have "found" the Kingdom life of God. What do you find most joyful about the new life? How are your priorities changing in light of the Kingdom life that you have discovered? What are some of the stresses that God's priorities can invite into your life? What do you need to let go of or "sell" in order to more deeply take hold of God's Kingdom gift to you?

In verses 31 and 32, Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed that needs to be planted in the earth. Review the ways you have sown Kingdom values in your life, priorities, and relationships. What growth have you seen? What still remains invisible and requires your faithfulness and patience?

APPLICATION TOOLS: Take some time to study the needs in our world by accessing the material provided with this resource, or by accessing the data from the Millennium Development Goals site www.un.org/millenniumgoals/.

Frederich Buechner describes our "calling" from God as "the place where our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." What is the pain and need in the world that troubles you most, that you would be especially glad to help alleviate or end?

At the present time, what gifts, skills and training are you contributing to God's Kingdom plan? Is God prompting you to explore a new direction, or take a new step of obedience? If so, talk to a spiritual mentor, your pastor or contact CBM to get more information or explore how you can get involved.

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PRAYER GUIDE: Re-read the Lord's Prayer as a guide to your own prayer life. Speak honestly to God about the way you want to be an answer to the prayer: your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Tell God about your possible goals or dream and ask Him to refine and encourage you.