



KINGDOM of GOD

WELCOME TO

# KINGDOM OF GOD 101

We made this 14-session discipleship guide about the Kingdom of God for the City Church family in Charlottesville, Virginia, but it is available to anyone responding to the call to follow Jesus!

At City Church, we say we are a “Biblically Based, Relationally Driven, Spirit Led Church”. Being Biblically Based means we take the Bible seriously. We believe clearly hearing the message of the Bible is of irreplaceable importance for following Jesus.

You might ask, “Why do a series on the *Kingdom of God*? Isn’t that a bit off the beaten path? What about those other, more familiar topics like grace, faith, love, sin, forgiveness, salvation, gospel and heaven? Shouldn’t we focus on one of these more well known biblical topics instead?”

What if we told you that the “Kingdom of God” isn’t really off the beaten path? What if we told you it is not just one idea among many, but is the central theme of the New Testament? We believe understanding the importance of the Kingdom of God and the role it plays in the Bible and everyday life is essential for every Christian.

Throughout this discipleship series we will acknowledge other resources written by authors, pastors, bible scholars, and seminary professors. Kingdom of God 101 is our way of sharing with you what these folks have shared with us. We are so grateful for the work of others who have taught and disciplined us along our theological journey into the Kingdom.

As we begin this 14-session series, we hold a hope and a prayer for you. We hope that as you study these materials, you will discover the joy, peace and freedom of life in God’s Kingdom. Our prayer is for God’s Kingdom to come and His will to be done in your life as it is in heaven!



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# VIDEO 1: THE KINGDOM AS A LENS

## Review

There will be 14 videos in this series. We produced these videos and this book with the intention of leading you through one session a day for two weeks. If, however, that doesn't work for you, go at your own pace. We also hope you come back to these materials for a refresher.

In the back of this booklet, you will find a list of helpful resources. Some of them are materials we reference in these videos, some of them are just good to know about. But you should be able to use that list as a next step for your own study.

Now, as the saying goes, "If you catch a man a fish, he eats for a day. If you teach a man to fish, he eats forever." This Kingdom of God series is a "teach a man to fish" situation. We cannot cover everything there is to say about the Kingdom in 14 sessions, but we do think we can spark your imagination and give you a couple tools to help train and disciple you in this Gospel of the Kingdom. We hope that our time together is the start of a much longer journey, a much larger life in God's Kingdom for you.



# VIDEO 1: THE KINGDOM AS A LENS

## Process

This video introduced the word "hermeneutics." In a sentence or two, define that term in your own words.

Write down three of the key ideas from today's session.

What are you expecting for the next 14 sessions? Record some of what you are looking forward to and wondering about as we begin this journey.

## Reflect

The core-passage for this video was Colossians 1:9-14. Reflect on that passage. After video 1, does the text have any new or deeper meaning for you?

## Pray

In your own words, write a prayer asking the Lord to be at work over the course of these 14 videos.



## VIDEO 2: BEGINNING AT THE BEGININGS



### Review

In this session, we looked at Matthew and at Luke's nativity stories – two narratives of Jesus' birth. Matthew focuses on Joseph while Luke focuses on Mary (true of the two genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3). For many of us, these are probably familiar stories we hear every year around December 25. What might be new this time around, is the idea these are stories about the Kingdom of God.

Matthew tells us a story asking the question: who is the true king of Israel, Jesus or Herod? Luke tells a story asking the question: who is the true king of the world, Jesus or Caesar? As much as these stories bring us a sense of joy and comfort in the Christmas season, they are also the beginnings of a conflict-driven story, one that will reach its climax at the Cross. The question that is building up along the way: who is really the King?

One note: In the video, we accidentally said there were FIVE kings missing from Matthew's genealogy. It is actually THREE. Apologies.

### Process

In this video, Pete and Peter pointed out a number of interesting elements of Matthew 1-2, for instance, the way Matthew structures his genealogy so that Jesus is the seven in the story of God's people. List the other major elements Pete and Peter pointed out.

Do the same for Luke 1-3. List the elements of Luke 1-3 that Pete and Peter pointed out in this video.

## VIDEO 2: BEGINNING AT THE BEGININGS

This session drew contrasts between Jesus and Herod, Jesus and Caesar. From the beginning, we learn Jesus is a king unlike other kings. Now, Jesus of Nazareth was a real person who lived at a particular time in history, but he is not limited to that time and place. We believe he is, to this day, the living son of God. It is easy to think of what we have learned today as simply a history lesson, but when we learn about Jesus, we learn about the person who we believe in today. Herod and Caesar are long dead. But there are still "powers" in our world that seek to rule the world. In our day and age, who are the powers of the world that challenge Jesus as King? How is Jesus unlike these other rulers of the modern world?

### Reflect

Pete and Peter discussed elements in Matthew 1-2 that teach us about the Kingdom of God. What other elements do you see in the story that teach about the Kingdom of God? Any other phrases, characters, or symbols?

### Pray

In your own words, write a prayer to Jesus. We have learned he is a king unlike any other. In light of this truth, what do you want to say to him today?



## VIDEO 3: JESUS GETS POLITICAL

### Review



There are many words we Christians use today, words that, to us, sound distinctly religious as opposed to political. “Church” is a religious word, but “party” is a political word. “Savior” is a religious word but “king” is a political word. Here’s the big twist, our religious words did not sound religious to the authors of the New Testament.

As a piece of historical evidence, we looked at the Priene Calendar inscription, written in 9 BCE. This little piece of ancient writing is helpful for our understanding of the Bible because it is packed with terms Luke (but also the rest of the New Testament) uses to talk about Jesus. Here is what the Priene inscription says:

It seemed good to the Greeks of Asia, in the opinion of the high priest Apollonius of Menophilus Azanitus: “Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings (Gospel) for the world that came by reason of him,” which Asia resolved in Smyrna.

Now the point of today’s training is not to tell you about a cool ancient artifact. The point is, rather, that the ancient world had no clear line between religion and politics. There is no separation of church and state in Rome. The New Testament authors were not “devotional” as opposed to political writers. No! They had a message about Jesus and the Kingdom of God to share that changed everything.

## VIDEO 3: JESUS GETS POLITICAL

Being open to Jesus’ Kingdom in all its fullness – this is what it means to follow Jesus. We should be prepared for him to correct whatever worldview we have inherited, no matter how well it has served us in the past. No other religion and no other politics can replace the Kingdom of God for Jesus’ followers.

### Process

Take a pen, pencil, or highlighter. Underline or highlight any key words or phrases in the Priene Calendar inscription that you also recognize from the New Testament - either in Luke’s Gospel or elsewhere. How does this ancient, secular, political use of these words change the way you hear the words in the Bible?

List the words we discussed today. How do we use each of these words in modern Christianity? What did each of those words mean in their ancient context?

How does this material from extra-biblical literature help you think about the “politics” or the Kingdom of God in the world?



## VIDEO 3: JESUS GETS POLITICAL CONT'D



### Reflect

In video 2, "Beginning at the Beginnings", Pete and Peter noted elements in Luke 1-3 that teach us about the Kingdom of God. What other elements do you see in the story that teach us about the Kingdom of God? Any other phrases, characters, or symbols?

### Pray

In your own words, write a prayer to king Jesus. If you have never acknowledged Jesus as the Lord of your life, you can do that today for the first time! If you have been a citizen of God's kingdom, even for many years, why don't you take some time today writing a prayer of remembrance and gratitude for Jesus as king?

## VIDEO 4: THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Review

This video reviewed of the story of the Old Testament. Let's start with the other names we used for the Old Testament.

The first one is Pentateuch. It literally means "five books" and it refers to the "Five Books of Moses": Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Those first five books of the Old Testament are the Pentateuch.

The first five books are also called "the Torah," a Hebrew word meaning "teaching." They are called the Torah because they are meant to be the "teachings of Moses."

But, of course, there are more than five books in the Old Testament. There are also the historical books, poetry, and the prophets. All those books, taken together as a set, are occasionally used to refer by a third name: the Hebrew Scriptures or the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Scriptures are written almost entirely in the Hebrew language.

The word Judaism uses for the Hebrew Bible is the "Tanakh". Tanakh is actually an acronym: Ta- na- kh. The "Ta" stands for Torah. The "na" stands for Nevi'im, which is the Hebrew word for "prophets." The "k" stands for Ketuvim, which is a Hebrew word meaning "writings." So Tanakh stands for Torah, Prophets, Writings. This makes sense because, for centuries, Judaism has structured the Scriptures by genre. If you went into a synagogue and opened a copy of the Hebrew Bible, you'd notice the books were in a different order than in your Christian Bible, because Christians organize the scriptures, more or less, by chronology as opposed to genre.

However you organize the books, the big story is the same, and this is the meat of what we talked about today, the central storyline told from the Hebrew Bible.





# VIDEO 4: THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Review



First, God made the world with a particular vision of how it should work. Genesis 1-2. God makes the world and gives humanity a unique place within that world. He gives us a vocation: to be God's image bearers.

But then, humanity fails to fulfill that vision. This failure is expressed in Genesis 3-11. Human beings decide to do something other than be God's image bearers. They keep trying to replace God. At first that comes in the form of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But by the end of chapter 11, through their own strength of will, human beings are tied up in all kinds of knots.

Starting in Genesis 12, God launches a rescue mission. God comes to a man named Abram (whose name will later change to Abraham) and gives him an offer. God asks Abram to devote his whole family to God's mission. If Abram and his children do this, if they choose to follow God as God's own people, then God will not only bless them but God will make them a blessing to everyone else on earth. Abraham's children are the Jews. Their life as a people becomes the central concern of the Hebrew Bible. Through captivity in Egypt, God's miraculous act of salvation, the establishment of a government, and the eventual collapse of that government, the Tanakh tells the story of the ups and downs of Israel's life as the story of God's attempt to fix the world. This part of the story spans the Hebrew Scripture from Genesis 12 to the end of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament.

Throughout all of this, we have a growing sense not only of God's mission for the salvation of the world, but how the mission is frustrated along the way.

# VIDEO 4: THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Process

Video 4: The Kingdom of God through the Old Testament, looked at the whole story, but it also traced the theme of Kingdom throughout. Take a second to jot down the key figures and key themes from the Tanakh.

Does this session change your understanding of the Hebrew Bible? If so, how?

## Reflect

This video looked at two related passages of Scripture: Psalm 2 and Hebrews 1. Go back and re-read those two passages. There are resonances between them in which the author of Hebrews teaches about Jesus the King through the Psalm. Take some time to write down what we learn about the Kingdom of God from Psalm 2 and Hebrews 1.

If you would like an extra-resource as a guide for this reflection, take a look at the Bible Project's video on the Book of Hebrews.

## Pray

When we pray, we pray to the God who made the world, who began to save the world in Israel, and who lovingly continued to save the world in Jesus Christ. Write a prayer in your own words to this God. What might you need from God today? How might you sense God's invitation to partner with Him today?



## VIDEO 5: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

### Review



This video is all about what pastors would call Jesus' "road sermon." This is the go-to talk he gave everywhere he went. Matthew decided it would be helpful for us to hear it right at the beginning of his Gospel.

Remember, Matthew placed his review of Jesus' sermon at a very particular place in his Gospel-narrative. Matthew designs his Gospel such that the first few chapters symbolically follow the story of the Torah. In chapters 5-7, he puts it in a spot that symbolizes Jesus as the new Moses: Jesus is literally up on a mountain giving a new law. Matthew tells us Jesus is on a mission to offer a new vision of what it means to be God's people that also fulfills the original vision God gave to Abraham.

Matthew 5-7 contains this core body of teaching Jesus' followers are called to study and obey. For all who have taken up a life of discipleship to Jesus, these three chapters hold a special place in our walk. As we said in the video, there is not a core to these three chapters. They can't be boiled down to something more simple, a singular topic like faith or grace or righteousness, because the Sermon on the Mount encompasses all those things.

A Kingdom-centered approach to the Sermon on the Mount has this key insight: it recognizes that Jesus' teaching here is not a general ethic. Jesus' commands in this sermon are not meant to be the outline for the World's governments. No – these are the laws that govern Jesus' Kingdom. The end goal of these teachings is not to make you a good person or a respectable person. The end goal of these teachings is to make you a citizen of God's Kingdom.

## VIDEO 5: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

### Process

Pete and Peter talked about how the first seven chapters of Matthew are designed to "replay" the story of Moses. List out the point of connection between Matthew and the Torah below. We will do the first one for you:

Moses is born under the rule of Pharaoh

Jesus is born under the rule of Herod

Think about the Kingdom-centered approach to the Sermon on Mount. Does it change the way you read Jesus' words here? Does it change the way you apply them to your life?

Give the Sermon on the Mount a quick, cursory read. There's a lot of material in these three chapters, so you may not have time to re-read them in detail. Maybe just even read the section headings in your Bible. Having done that, take some time below to write out a description of life in the Kingdom of God. What does life in the Kingdom look like? What do people value in the Kingdom? How do they act in the Kingdom?





## VIDEO 5: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT CONT'D



### Reflect

Just like Pete and Peter did in this session's video, choose just one segment from Matthew 5-7 and spend some time thinking about it. What does it teach you about the Kingdom of God?

### Pray

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray what we call the Lord's prayer: Matthew 6.9-13. Thoughtfully and slowly, pray the Lord's prayer as your own today.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

**OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE  
THY NAME. THY KINGDOM COME. THY WILL BE DONE  
ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. GIVE US THIS DAY OUR  
DAILY BREAD. AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS  
WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US. AND  
LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US  
FROM EVIL. FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER  
AND THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.**



## VIDEO 6: WHAT JESUS DID

### Review



Now, we are starting to get into the meat and potatoes of Kingdom theology, the life of Jesus. For the next few sessions, we will be talking about the story of Jesus between nativity (Jesus' birth) and crucifixion (Jesus' death). This session is about what Jesus did, in particular, his miracles and the calling of his disciples.

Our own culture does not have an imagination for miracles. They are often thought of as odd disruptions in the laws of nature. A modern approach is unhelpful when trying to understand what Jesus of Nazareth was doing when he performed miracles.

Jesus' miracles were signs God's Kingdom was coming to earth. When God's Kingdom comes, all anti-God forces must flee. Demons, sickness, shame, etc., are the forces of darkness. Jesus spent his life fighting these forces, forces that seized control over the world when human beings gave up their God-imaging vocation. See Genesis 3-11.

We also examined Jesus' practice of calling disciples to follow him. Matthew 8.18-22 is a high-potency passage about discipleship to Jesus. The historical practice of Jesus as a caller and maker of disciples teaches us something of great importance about the Kingdom of God: you learn the Kingdom through discipleship.

### Process

In this video, Pete and Peter review the way Matthew's story lines up with the narrative of the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Write out the points of parallel between Matthew 1-7 and the Torah.

## VIDEO 6: WHAT JESUS DID

In this session, we talked about peace, *shalom*. How would you describe the peace of the Kingdom of God? How is it different from the peace of the world?

Authority is an interesting idea that shows up in a surprising number of places in the Gospels. What do you think it means to live a life of authority in Christ? How does Jesus help us learn to do that?

### Reflect

For this session's reflection, read the discourse between Jesus and the Pharisees in Matthew 12.22-32. Here the Pharisees and Jesus conflict over the meaning of his miracles. Look at how Jesus responds to them. What does his response teach us about the meaning of his miracles? About the Kingdom of God?

Think about the people who have discipled you. What did they teach you?

Who are you currently discipling? If the answer to that question is "no one," how could you change the honest answer to that question?

### Pray

There may be some area of your own life where you need the Kingdom of God to come and the anti-God forces in the world to flee. In your own words, write a prayer inviting the Kingdom of God to come in that area of your life or relationships.



## VIDEO 7: PARABLES

### Review



This video looked at a distinct kind of teaching Jesus practiced: telling parables. He's so committed to the parable as a teaching tool, he tells a parable about parables (The Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13.1-9).

The difficult part of Jesus' parables is these stories can make him look deceptive, like Jesus is making it hard to understand him; hiding the plain truth. This idea may be distressing to some because it can seem hard-hearted.

There appears to be two reasons why Jesus speaks in parables. First, Jesus softens the blow of a message that might be too confrontational with a direct approach. If Jesus said what he said in a more straightforward way, he may have expedited the Crucifixion!

Second, other rabbis also used parables. The form was familiar to the culture surrounding Jesus' life. The parables are stories a person must grapple with; wrestle with. They are not straightforward. A person learns the truth of a parable by struggling with it.

### Process

Parables are like this:

A man bought a new exercise system on a friend's recommendation. The system arrived in the mail in a big wooden box. The package came with a crowbar and he had to pry the box open with his own strength. Once the man opened the box, he found yet another box inside. Ten times, he pried open the box only to find a smaller one inside. By the time he reached the last box, a box small enough to fit in his hand, the man was exhausted. He opened the box with the last bit of strength in his cramping hand. Inside, he found a note: *Congratulations! You've finished your first workout!*

## VIDEO 7: PARABLES

### Reflect

When Jesus explains to his disciples how his parables work, he quotes a passage to them from the Tanakh: Isaiah 6.9-10. Re-read Jesus' conversation with his disciples in Matthew 13.10-17, then look at the passage he quotes from Isaiah. Why do you think Jesus quotes this passage? What is the point he is trying to make about his use of parables?

Depending on how you count, there are either nine or ten parables in Matthew 13. Pick one and sit with it for a few minutes. What do you learn about the Kingdom of

### Pray

In your own words, write a prayer asking Jesus to be the kind of soil that bears fruit, just like in the parable of the sower and the seed.



## VIDEO 8: MID-POINT RECAP

### Review



Video 8 marks the halfway point for this discipleship training. Instead of adding new material, we are going to review and reinforce what we have been learning.

Pete and Peter wanted to remind us of a few main points on which this study of the Kingdom of God has been building over the last seven sessions.

- (1) The message of the Kingdom is the method of the Kingdom. You cannot spread a message about the Kingdom of God but live under the kingdoms of the world. A life lived in the Kingdom is the best Evangelism.
- (2) The Gospel is the Kingdom. We have been looking at passages in the Gospels that illuminate the announcement of the Kingdom as the center of the Good News about Jesus. See Mark 1.15 and Matthew 4.23.
- (3) The Gospel of the Kingdom is comprehensive: it covers every area of our life. Jesus' teachings leave out no part of our lives - relational, political, sexual, economic. When we enter God's Kingdom by grace, we check no part of us at the gate.
- (4) The Gospel of the Kingdom brings clarity to what it means to be a Christian. It helps us make sense, of Scripture, of the big ideas in the Christian life, and of the world around us. The Gospel of the Kingdom is a lens through which we see God's work and will in our world more clearly.

### Process

Take some time today to go back through this booklet. Look at the answers you have written down so far. Appreciate how much you have been learning. If a particular point in one of the videos stood out to you, go back and watch it again.

## VIDEO 8: MID-POINT RECAP

What else might you add to the list of things you are learning besides what Pete and Peter already said in video 8?

### Reflect

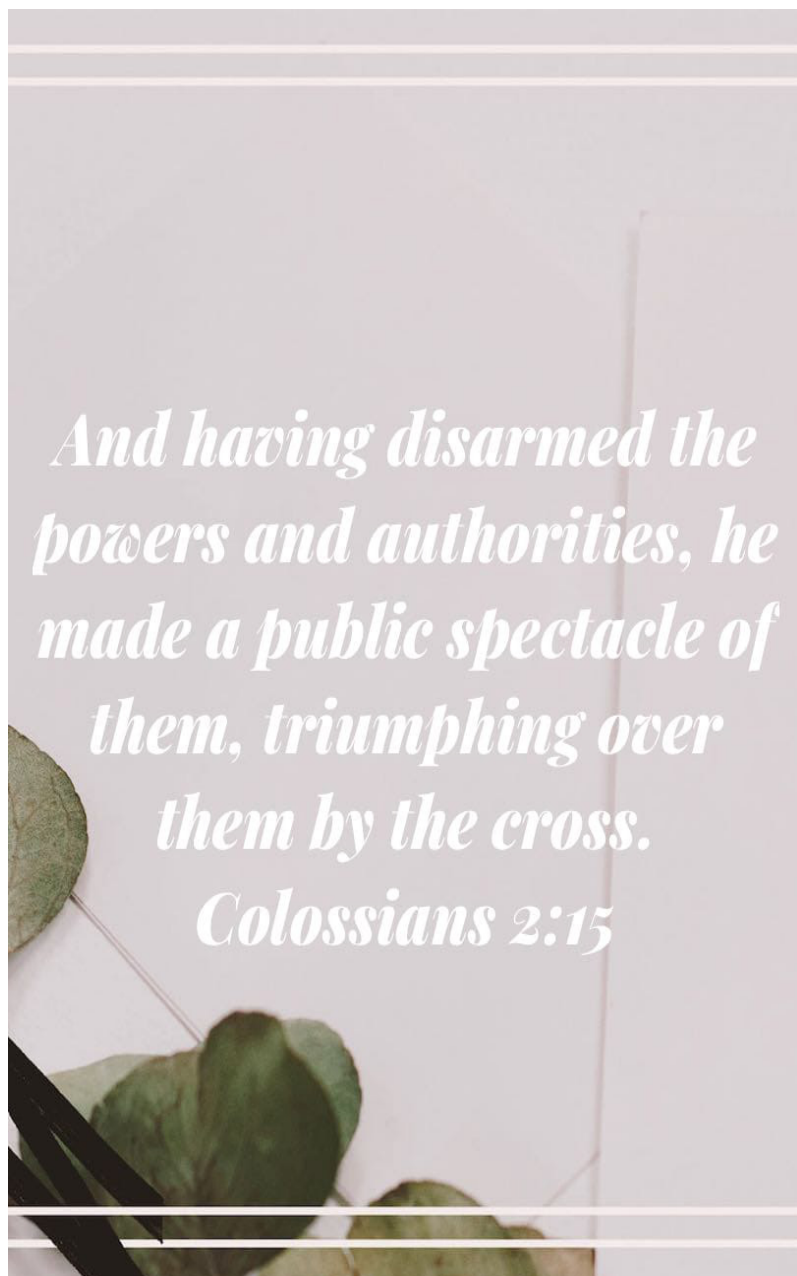
We have covered many different passages from the New Testament over the last seven sessions. But for this session's reflection, we'd like to send you to a few verses that we have not yet covered: 1 Corinthians 15. This whole chapter is one of Paul's most important reflections on resurrection, which we will cover in more detail in the next video. But in the middle of this discourse on resurrection, we get a fantastic nugget of Paul's theology of the Kingdom. Reflect today on this passage: 1 Corinthians 12.20-28.

### Pray

In your own words, write a prayer inviting God to keep with us on this journey of discipleship for another seven sessions.



## VIDEO 9: CROSS & RESURRECTION



## VIDEO 9: CROSS & RESURRECTION

### Review

This session brings us to the climax of the story of the Kingdom of God coming into the world through Jesus: the original Easter weekend. Within the span of three days, the darkest and the brightest moments in all of human history transpire.

First, the Crucifixion. The crazy thing about the Cross is that what appears to be an execution is actually Jesus' coronation. The Gospels tell us how he had a royal robe placed on his body, a crown of thorns thrust on his head, and a scepter used to punish him. What looks like a moment of great mockery is a moment of triumph. Pilate orders a sign placed above Jesus' cross identifying him as "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," a chilling way to tell the truth about his kingship.

Who really is on trial in the Cross? Is it Jesus who is declared guilty or is it the powers who are making his execution happen in the first place?

And who is making his execution happen? Paul tells us in Colossians 2:15 that the ultimate responsibility for the Cross is not the crowd or the government, but the "powers and authorities," the anti-God forces that have taken control over the world. Shame, Death, Hell, the Grave, are the real culprits in Jesus' death, and these are the authorities who are defeated by his Cross.

This defeat of anti-God forces is evidenced by the Resurrection. When Jesus is raised from the dead, he has triumphed over his enemies. God considers Jesus innocent even though the powers condemn him as guilty. The Resurrection proves he who was crucified is the King in the Kingdom of God, and he will reign eternal, over death, forever.

The Cross and Resurrection are the high point in story of the Kingdom.





## VIDEO 9: CROSS & RESURRECTION



### Process

Many of us already know the Cross is how God deals with our sin, but this Kingdom element may be new for many of us. Take some time to reflect in a few sentences on how the Cross is both Jesus' coronation as God's king and God's way of saving us from our sins.

Easter may not be too far off for some of us going through these sessions. How would the material we talked about today change the way you celebrate Easter this year?

### Reflect

Take a look at Colossians 2.8-15. It is a fun passage where we find a lot of big New Testament themes appearing all at the same time. What do you think Paul is trying to teach the Colossians about the Cross in this passage? About the Church? About the Kingdom?

### Pray

In your own words, write a prayer asking God for a deeper understanding of the Kingdom of God in your own life.

## VIDEO 10: ASCENSION & PENTECOST

### Review

Video 10 pays attention to two moments in the life of the resurrected Jesus, moments people do not talk about much. The first is his Ascension into heaven - a story told both in Luke 24 and in Acts 1- and the second is Pentecost.

The Ascension ends the ministry of Jesus in his body on earth. This can feel like Jesus is simply going away, like he is abandoning his Church to carry on without him, but the Ascension is not bad news. The Ascension is the good news of the beginning of Jesus' reign at the right hand of God for the rest of history.

Pentecost, which happens just a chapter later in Acts, is the fulfillment of promises Jesus made to his disciples. Pentecost is the moment in which the Holy Spirit assumes a qualitatively new relationship with humanity. The day of Pentecost is a dramatic event with spiritual fireworks, but it is not just a big, dramatic event for drama's sake. Pentecost is another installment in the story of God's Kingdom. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit become the source of the Church's ability to carry on Jesus' Kingdom ministry once he leaves the earth.

### Process

Sometimes the Ascension and Pentecost do not get very much attention in American churches. They end up being ornamental aspects of the church-year. Imagine if we did not have the stories of the Ascension and the Day of Pentecost in the New Testament at all. What would we not know about the Kingdom of God without these two stories?





## VIDEO 10: ASCENSION & PENTECOST



### Process

This video referenced a point made by theologian Cherith Fee Nordling: the Ascension means a human being is sitting on the throne of God. She suggests this should change how we pray. Does connecting the humanity and the royalty of Jesus change how you think of prayer?

### Reflect

Acts 2 is a hefty chapter. Take some time to read through Peter's sermon. Where do you see elements of the Kingdom of God?

### Pray

In your own words, ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit. Maybe this is the first time you have ever done that. Maybe you have had experiences with the Holy Spirit like this already. Whatever your background, simply ask Jesus for the Holy Spirit and give yourself some time to prayerfully rest in God's presence. While you pray consider what Jesus says in Luke 11:13 "if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

## VIDEO 10: ASSENSION & PENTECOST

IF YOU THEN, THOUGH YOU ARE EVIL, KNOW  
HOW TO GIVE GOOD GIFTS TO YOUR  
CHILDREN, HOW MUCH MORE WILL YOUR  
FATHER IN HEAVEN GIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT  
TO THOSE WHO ASK HIM!"  
LUKE 11:13



## VIDEO 11: GOD'S PEOPLE, JEW & GENTILE

### Review



If most of us were asked about our heritage or our background, we would likely give an answer about the last generation or two of our family. "Oh, we're Scotch-Irish" or "Well, my parents came over here from Pakistan." Never would a person say, "I'm just a run-of-the-mill Gentile."

Chances are, most of us who will process through this Kingdom of God 101 course are just that, Gentiles. We are not blood descendants of the historical Abraham. It is hard to over-emphasize the importance of the Jew-Gentile divide in the Scriptures. The Old Testament routinely asks its reader a question: "Are you born of Abraham's seed or not?" If you are not, you are in an uncomfortable position. In Ephesians 2.12, Paul tells the Gentiles they were, "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Even so, to Paul, the great surprise in the story of the Kingdom is the inclusion of Gentiles into the covenant God made with Abraham.

For most of us, this is not remarkable. We have met very few people who are also surprised by the inclusion of non-Jewish Americans in God's family through Christ. This is a big loss. It robs us of the joy of knowing we have been included in a family into which we could never have entered by ourselves. The inclusion of those of us who are Gentiles ought to give us a profound sense of gratitude.

## VIDEO 11: GOD'S PEOPLE, JEW & GENTILE

### Process

This video asks us to seriously consider the implications of the story of Jew and Gentile. This might be a new thought for many, a new way of seeing identity. Below, list out some elements of your identity you think about often. What makes you *you*?

At the end of that list add, "Gentile, welcome in."

### Reflect

Look back at Ephesians 2.11-22. This is just one of the many places Paul will talk about the new relationship between Jew and Gentile in Jesus Christ. How do you see Kingdom imagery appearing in this passage?

### Pray:

In your own words, write a prayer of gratitude for your place in God's people - whether you are an ingrafted Gentile or a Jew.



## VIDEO 12: PAUL & THE CHURCH

### Review



This video presents an opportunity to pay attention to the New Testament's most prolific writer: St. Paul of Tarsus. Paul is a helpful voice to have in the Scriptures because he is like us in that he never studied with Jesus in the flesh and only heard about Jesus after the Resurrection. Paul's whole career led him to wrestle with the same questions with which we ourselves wrestle: What should the Church look like? What should Christians do in the face of world powers? How does the Kingdom of God keep going after Jesus?

Paul himself rarely uses the word "Kingdom", especially compared to Jesus, but this doesn't mean Paul is not talking about the Kingdom of God. Session 12 was our chance to look at some of the ways Paul references the Kingdom of God without using those words.

We discussed two themes in Paul's writings, Jesus' rule and the "politics" of the Church, both which suggest Paul was thinking and writing about the Kingdom of God.

It is easy to find scripture where Paul talks about Jesus as a ruler. Think of how many times Paul calls Jesus "Lord." In the video, we look closely at Ephesians 1.15-2.10.

### Process

Think about other famous passages or phrases you know in the writings of Paul. Where else do you see the language of the Kingdom?

## VIDEO 12: PAUL & THE CHURCH

Paul lived between cultures. Throughout the course of his life, he lived in Tarsus, Israel, and Damascus, among other places. He was a Pharisee, a Roman citizen, a maker of tents. He lived in the thick of ancient Mediterranean society. Even with competing identities, Paul saw himself - first and foremost - as a citizen of heaven. You too are a person with competing identities. Think through the places you have lived, experiences you have had, vocations you have fulfilled. Spend some time

### Reflect

Spend some time with Philippians 3.17-20. Read this passage as though Paul is writing it directly to you and your community. What would it mean?

### Pray

Paul liked to write prayers for his communities to include a famous prayer for the Ephesian Church (Ephesians 1.3-10). Pray that prayer today, either for yourself or someone close to you.



## VIDEO 13: THE CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM

### Review



Video 13 is the last substantive installment in Kingdom of God 101. Fittingly, it is an opportunity to talk about Eschatology.

Eschatology is the technical theological term for God's intended end for the world. It comes from the Greek word *eschaton* which means "end" or "goal."

God intends, at the end of history, to bring the whole world into God's Kingdom. The book of Revelation and many other passages of the Bible are about this final day when God will make everything right. The anti-God forces Jesus defeated on the Cross will be destroyed and God will reign unchallenged forever.

We can be sure God will make everything right because of Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus' Resurrection is like an appetizer of the meal God is cooking for the end of history. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead so he would never be subjected to the power of death, God will rescue the whole universe; all of creation, from the power of death.

We live in the in-between times. Jesus' Resurrection has already injected the power of eternal life into creation, but we are waiting for the final moment when eternal life is given to us in the fullest sense.

How does this affect how we live our lives now? When we do the work of the Kingdom, we are helping God build an eternal city which will, one day, be fully established. We invest in God's future for our world. The most important thing we can do in our lives now is participate in a Kingdom that is never going to end!

## VIDEO 13: THE CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM

### Process

The full consummation of the Kingdom of God is reason for great hope. Hope is something we all need but it does not come easy. Let's practice hope. Take a moment to write in your own words what the hope of God's Kingdom looks like for you. How does the knowledge of your place in God's already-here-but-still-coming Kingdom give you hope for today?

### Reflect

Read and reflect on Revelation 21. Revelation 21 is a big chapter, but the truth of God's Kingdom is beautifully expressed in these words. Read the chapter through. What does this passage teach us about the Kingdom of God?

### Pray

When Jesus was crucified, Luke tells us he hung on the a cross between two criminals. As they were dying, One of them said, "Jesus, remember when you come into your kingdom." Luke 23.42. Pray that prayer to Jesus today, those simple words. Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom. As you pray those words, take confidence that Jesus says the same thing to you he says to this dying man: *Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.*



## VIDEO 14: WRAP UP

### Review



You did it! You have made it to the end of Kingdom of God 101.

This last session gives us some time to wrap things up and look back at what we learned. Pete and Peter's big lessons learned are:

The Gospel of the Kingdom changes how we read the scriptures.

The Gospel of the Kingdom provides clarity on what Christian faith is about.

The Gospel of the Kingdom changes how we look at life and its struggles.

The Gospel of the Kingdom gives us hope for the future so we can live life fully here and now.

The Gospel of the Kingdom calls us to bring heaven to earth, instead of trying to get to heaven when we die.

We hope you also have your own takeaways. God is the only expert in the Kingdom. We are all mere citizens.

But this is the point: We are citizens of *this Kingdom!* To take that seriously, to hear the gracious invitation of God to be a part of this Kingdom is the fun and the adventure of the Christian life. We can ignore it if we please - plenty of people ignored Jesus' invitations - but we believe nothing is more important in your life than your orientation to the Kingdom of God.

In the beginning of Kingdom of God 101, we said we hold a hope and a prayer for you. Our hope was that as you studied these materials, you would discover the joy, peace and freedom of life in God's Kingdom. Our prayer is for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done in your life as it is in heaven. One series does not accomplish that by itself, but it can be a starting point. We remain steadfast in our hope and prayer you will move deeper into God's Kingdom until the day when God makes all things new.

God bless.

## VIDEO 14: WRAP UP

### Process

You have learned so much over the last 14 sessions. You have read a lot of scripture, wrestled with key ideas, and prayed your own prayers. In this last chance to process, take the space below to summarize what Kingdom of God 101 has illuminated for you. If it is helpful, pretend you were asked by a friend "Why should I go through Kingdom of God 101? How would it help me?"

### Reflect

Return again to Mark 1.15. We have talked about this verse more than once. It is a great example of Jesus himself as the one who brings the Good News of God's Kingdom. Give this verse a final moment of attention as a way of sealing what the

### Pray

End this final session of Kingdom of God 101 with the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray. Consider what it means to commit your life to this prayer: *Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*







# EXTRA RESOURCES

NCC daily podcast

Kingdom of God video from Bible Project



