



# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A Daily Devotional  
Eastbrook Church



# **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

**A Daily Devotional by  
the People of Eastbrook Church**



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# INTRODUCTION

What do you think of when you hear the phrase, “The Kingdom of God”?

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, “the kingdom of God, also called kingdom of Heaven, in Christianity, is the spiritual realm over which God reigns as King, or the fulfillment on earth of God's will.” For Christians, one of the greatest and most important themes of the Bible is the kingdom of God. That theme weaves throughout the entire Bible, tying the Old and New Testaments together around the reality that God is King.

Jesus began His ministry in Mark's Gospel by proclaiming: *“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* (Mark 1:15).<sup>1</sup> His hearers knew, from the prophecies, that signs of the kingdom were, *“The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.”*

But what does the kingdom of God mean for us today where we live and with what we face? Particularly, how do we navigate being “*in the world*” but not “*of the world*” (John 17:14-18) when it comes to living the kingdom in our everyday lives and the world around us? With our present cultural moment more polarized than ever, we need to regain our footing in the fullness of God's kingdom that orients us toward God as King, Jesus as Lord, and the Spirit as present in the church.

We will wrestle together with these ideas over the next 5 weeks as we explore what it means for us to live as citizens of God's kingdom through the words of God.

Each week of this devotion will feature an page for you respond to your weekly worship experience: what thoughts or images from your time of worship struck you hardest? There will be a weekly memory verse that will help orient your thoughts on God's kingdom throughout the week. There will be five scripture passages with reflections written by a variety of Eastbrookers to help you resonate with the God's Word. And finally, each Saturday there is a page for you to simply respond to all you have experienced and learned that week. What is God telling you about Himself, His kingdom and your part in it?

Our hope is, as always, you will be drawn closer to Christ through your interaction with His word. May His kingdom come, His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

## ABOUT EASTBROOK 365

Due to the uncertainty of the season we find ourselves in, we at Eastbrook are writing and producing a year of daily devotionals that we are calling "Eastbrook 365." These devotionals will align with our sermon series from September 2020-August 2021 and will help Eastbrookers near and far grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus, while also continuing to pilgrimage together as a Church.

You can read these devotionals in a variety of ways.

- Download the Eastbrook App for your phone and read each day ([eastbrook.org/app](http://eastbrook.org/app))
- Download individual PDFs of each devotional to read at home or print out at home ([eastbrook.org/devotionals](http://eastbrook.org/devotionals))
- Sign up for the Eastbrook 365 Devotional email to be delivered to your inbox each morning ([eastbrook.org/email](http://eastbrook.org/email))
- Pick up a paper copy at church as each devotional begins (limited copies available)

We pray God's blessings on you as you spend time with Him each day.

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## HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

1. Plan a 15-minute window each day when you can thoughtfully do the daily reading. Set a time, create a pattern, and stick to it for all five weeks.
2. Decide whether you want to invite your friends, family, or small group to join you.
3. Begin each day by reading the Scripture passage printed at the top of each page.
4. Read the devotional and reflect on it. Use the "Dig Deeper" questions to talk about it with someone else or to journal on your own.
5. Use the online version of the devotional readings to reach out to friends online and around the world. Invite them to follow along with you during this year of devotionals from Eastbrook, which we are calling "Eastbrook 365." Find the online version at [eastbrook.org/devotionals](http://eastbrook.org/devotionals). Use Eastbrook's Facebook page ([facebook.com/eastbrookchurch](https://facebook.com/eastbrookchurch)) and other social media outlets such as Twitter and Instagram ([@eastbrookchurch](https://twitter.com/eastbrookchurch)) to share ideas. Post your comments, thoughts, and questions in the online version. Read others' comments. This is a great way to learn from the perspective of others.



**The earth is the Lord's,  
and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it;  
for he founded it on the seas  
and established it on the waters.**

***Psalm 24:1-2***

## **WEEK 1: GOD IS KING**

### **WORSHIP EXPERIENCE RESPONSE**

Use this page to reflect on the worship service you experienced this week. You can include thoughts on the message, the prayers, the music, etc., whatever impacted you the most! Feel free to draw pictures, write poems, prayers or answers—whatever helps you process your worship experience.

- What stood out the most about your worship experience this week? Was there a song that you keep singing, a quote you keep thinking about or a prayer that you needed to hear?
  - What was the “Big Idea” behind the message you heard? What other important thoughts do you remember?
  - How can you respond to the message you’ve heard? Is there an action you will take this week to put it into practice in your life?
  - Is there someone in your life you think needs to experience this week’s worship service? How will you let them know? (You can share the link from our Eastbrook at Home webpage, [eastbrook.org/athome](http://eastbrook.org/athome))
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# KING JESUS

## Read 1 Samuel 8:1-9

*"Listen to the voice of the people regarding all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them." (1 Samuel 8:7)*

My friend, Dave, calls Jesus, "King Jesus," and it always jars me a bit. Would it change things if I addressed my Lord as "King"? I've never lived under a king's rule. Oh, I'm interested in the intrigues of the royal family, and I've watched "The King and I" and "Hamilton," but you will agree that I don't know much about what it means to be a citizen of a kingdom.

In our reading today, the great judge Samuel has grown old. His sons, anointed to serve after him, are a big disappointment. They weren't like their dad; they perverted justice and went after dishonest gain. There were enemy forces, especially the Philistines, who were coming up against Israel, and they were better armed and organized. God had consistently delivered His people under the reign of the judges, but it was a time when *"everyone did what was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 21:25).

Problems within and problems without, the people wanted to be *"like all the other nations"* (v. 20), protected and governed by a king.

Samuel warned them of the abuses of power and loss of freedom they would come to know. He grieved at their rejection of God's personal and direct guidance. But God answered their prayer, and the monarchy was established. The reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon showed Israel what a kingdom ruled by a man of God could look like, as well as how awful a worldly king could be.

Jesus is our King of Kings. His kingdom is not about gaining power and wealth, but of justice, peace, and unity.

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**For Reflection:** Do you reject God's leading in your own life? Do you expect that an earthly president will bring justice and unity? Try addressing our Lord as "King Jesus" and see what difference it makes.

# AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

## Read Psalm 24

As I begin reading this psalm of David, I think it's important to remember that David was a man after God's own heart. In Acts 13:22 it says "...he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'" But what does it mean to be a man after God's own heart?

In Psalm 24:1-6 David writes:

- <sup>1</sup> *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it;*
- <sup>2</sup> *for he founded it on the seas  
and established it on the waters.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?  
Who may stand in his holy place?*
- <sup>4</sup> *The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who does not trust in an idol  
or swear by a false god.*
- <sup>5</sup> *They will receive blessing from the Lord  
and vindication from God their Savior.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Such is the generation of those who seek him,  
who seek your face, God of Jacob.*

The God who created the heavens gave us some simple commands, to not worship idols and never tell lies and that is how we can receive the Lord's blessing.

As David continues in verses 7-10:

- <sup>7</sup> *Lift up your heads, you gates;  
be lifted up, you ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Who is this King of glory?  
The Lord strong and mighty,  
the Lord mighty in battle.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Lift up your heads, you gates;  
lift them up, you ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Who is he, this King of glory?  
The Lord Almighty—  
he is the King of glory.*

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**For Reflection:** As you read these words can you imagine the tune?  
Are you trying to be a person after God's own heart?



# HE WHO REVEALS MYSTERIES

**Read Daniel 2:29-49**

One of my favorite story arcs is the mystery. I love getting to know the dark and sinister setting, the strange cast of characters, the odd and quirky investigator, and then after encountering the conflict, discovering a resolution at the end of the plot.

Daniel knows who he is and who he is not in this cast of intriguing characters. The setting is the magnificent Babylon, with its riches, its wisdom, and its wonders. There is a powerful king who has had an unsettling dream. He has all wealth and wisdom at his fingertips, but none can interpret his dream.

Daniel is not our ingenious detective, but he is a servant of YAHWEH, setting himself apart to pray, be holy, and dedicated to God, even in a foreign land. Daniel states clearly and explicitly to the king that he does not have more wisdom than other men, but that the LIVING and AWE-SOME God revealed the dream and its interpretation to him.

YAHWEH GOD reveals an image that represents several kingdoms that come and go—each having its flourishing and then decomposition—but the GOD of ALL still reigns above and beyond all. In fact, no matter how awesome and awe-inspiring these kingdoms, nations, and empires may have appeared at the time—*“not a trace of them can be found,”* but the *“stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth”* (Daniel 2:35).

It may not seem like it now as we look at the news, at the nations, or at our world, but the kingdom of our God is actually bigger, stronger, and more lasting than any human kingdom, nation or empire. *“The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed”* and *“It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and IT SHALL STAND FOREVER”* (Daniel 2:44).

We serve, like Daniel, the King who reigns over all kings, rulers, presidents and authorities. His kingdom is more real, more solid, more lasting than any kingdom of this world. Daniel gives YAHWEH God a name: He Who Reveals Mysteries.

May this God Who Reveals Mysteries be the one in whom we set our hope. There is no one else who is worthy of our complete devotion. All kingdoms will come and go, but His kingdom shall stand forever.

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**For Reflection:** In what ways can you live your life settled in the reality of the stronger, more real, and more lasting kingdom of God? What does it mean that God is He Who Reveals Mysteries? How does this reassure you in life?

# NOW BUT NOT YET

**Read Daniel 7:1-28**

I don't know about you, but when I come across these types of passages my mind immediately goes into interpretation mode. I read the images of the beasts, and my mind starts trying to line them up to ancient nation states. But in our particularly difficult season of COVID-19, working or learning remotely, conversations on Race in America, and also an election year, I find myself focusing on a new part of this passage that I normally pass over. In verse 15 Daniel said, *"I was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me."* And he later says in verse 28, *"I was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself."*

I can relate to those words as I see the difficult times that we currently live in, and I now find renewed hope in the main theme of this passage. The truth that no matter what difficulties people or nations can bring to this world, we have an assured hope that God's kingdom will prevail. That the Son of Man will rule forever, and we will have true peace. But this isn't a distant hope, one that is out of reach for us and only for the life to come. Jesus himself proclaimed, *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"* in Luke 4:21 when announcing the breaking through of the kingdom.

So how do we live in this tension? That God's kingdom has come now but yet we face a reality of fallen humanity still trying to keep control. Do we retreat from the world and create pockets of the kingdom removed from the world? How can we be present in the midst of so many who are asking for our allegiance and asking us to bend to their will that is different than God's?

This is one of the key mysteries of the kingdom of God. It is now. It is here. But the world remains broken.

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**For Reflection:** Consider how you live in such tension. Are you overcome by this world, or experiencing the hope of the kingdom now?

# THE FIRST COMMISSION

## Genesis 1-2

*"In the beginning, God created..."* Two things stood out to me as I studied this passage through the lens of the kingdom of God. First, that God is both Creator and King of this new kingdom, and second, that He commissions humans to rule it for Him.

As a Creator and a Kingdom-builder, our Triune God (1:1-2) acts with intentionality: the kingdom He builds has purpose! Before He sets out to create anything, from fish to plants, God declares what He will make and why. God is also careful to evaluate His work as He works, addressing one aspect of Creation at a time—a lesson for me as an artist in both pacing and critique! Everything is reviewed after it is made and deemed good before He moves on. This is a kingdom with intentionality, purpose, and design. It is good.

So when it comes to creating human beings, we read that God creates humanity in His own image, and He creates humans with the express purpose of "ruling" this new, good kingdom (1:26). In fact, these two things seem to be related; there's something about human beings as image-bearers of God that is connected with our role in ruling the earth: *"...Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule..."* (1:26).

In both creation accounts (Genesis 1:26-30 and 2:15-17), God is deputizing humanity to play a significant role in this kingdom that He has just created. We are not creators in the same way that God is, but He invites us to co-create with Him. We are not kings like God is, but we have a kingly commission to co-rule (the word '*radah*' in Hebrew is a royal word) the newly created world with Him. God doesn't just create on His own, He creates in and through humanity. God doesn't just reign on His own, He reigns over His creation in and through Adam and Eve then, and through all of us today!

Now, we all know how the story turns out. Adam and Eve do not follow the guidelines for living and ruling that God gives them in these first two chapters and things do not go according to plan once we hit Genesis 3. But in Genesis 1 and 2 we see the careful creation of a kingdom by a King who cares for everything and gives purpose to everything in His kingdom. We see a generous, trusting King who is willing to allow His creatures to create and to rule on His behalf. And it is good.

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## WEEK 1 REVIEW AND APPLICATION

Use this page either by yourself, with one or two other people, or with your Small Group to reflect on how this week's readings have impacted you.

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### ***Reflect on Your Discoveries from the Previous Week:***

Based on your reading and reflection this week, what did you discover about the kingdom of God?

What did you discover about yourself?

What questions are you still wondering about after having read the passages this week?

### ***Nurture Growth Through Confession and Repentance:***

As you went through the readings and devotions, where did the Spirit lead you to repentance and faith this week?

Spend time praying for others and for the Holy Spirit to help us have faith in the forgiveness and grace of God.

### ***Encourage Each Other Towards Action in Response:***

Share with each other your answers to these questions:

1. In light of what I have discovered about God and myself this week, what is one thing I need to do differently? What steps will I take to implement this change?
2. As a Disciple-Making-Disciple, who am I impacting for Christ? Who am I praying for? How am I introducing them to the kingdom of God?



**“The time has come,” he said.  
“The kingdom of God has come near.  
Repent and believe the good news!”**

***Mark 1:15***

## **WEEK 2: JESUS IS LORD**

### **WORSHIP EXPERIENCE RESPONSE**

Use this page to reflect on the worship service you experienced this week. You can include thoughts on the message, the prayers, the music, etc., whatever impacted you the most! Feel free to draw pictures, write poems, prayers or answers—whatever helps you process your worship experience.

- What stood out the most about your worship experience this week? Was there a song that you keep singing, a quote you keep thinking about or a prayer that you needed to hear?
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# YOUR RESPONSE REQUESTED

***Read Mark 1:14-20***

Jesus preached that God's kingdom was near and coming. He urged people to respond to this Good News by repenting and believing. Many may assume this is a message for new-believers. It is, but it's for the seasoned believer, too. Each day we have the choice to respond to the call of the kingdom. Repenting and turning from our sins is a daily practice. The daily practice of confession draws us deeper into God's grace. Believing is also a daily choice, too. If we believe that God's kingdom is both near and coming, how does that shape our lives? Let's look at how the invitation to believe shaped the lives of Jesus' first disciples.

In Mark 1:16-20, there is a sense of urgency as Jesus calls these two sets of brothers to follow Him and become His disciples. When the brothers leave behind their nets and boats to follow Jesus, they are not leaving a struggling business, but a thriving one (which can be assumed because James and John were able to hire workers). Their response to the urgency of Jesus' invitation of "Come, follow me," was to immediately leave what is prosperous and secure to accept Jesus' radical invitation to be part of the kingdom.

Responding to the Good News of the near and coming kingdom of God requires action. We see the disciples leaving, following, and later in the Gospels, we will see them take on Jesus' call to be sent out. Jesus offers us the same invitation to "fish for people." He calls for us to repent and believe and invite others to repent and believe. The kingdom of God is urgent and it calls for a response, for God's kingdom is truly near, today. How will you respond?

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## ***For Reflection:***

- Consider the disciples' response. Can we respond to the urgency of God's kingdom even when it's uncertain? Even when we have to leave things behind?
- What would it look like for you to "without delay" respond to God's kingdom invitation to repent and believe? How would making these two things daily practices shape your life?

# **JESUS AND HIS KINGDOM WORK**

***Read Matthew 4:18-25, 9:35-38***

Jesus called and Peter, Andrew, James and John immediately left their work as fishermen to follow Him. They did not possess education, power, wealth or fame, yet Jesus would make them fishers of people—not fish! They witnessed God's kingdom coming through Jesus' teaching, preaching and healing. Something new was happening and people were amazed and drawn to Jesus! The Pharisees questioned His authority and the crowds grew large. Jesus had compassion on the people in their deep spiritual hunger and need; this is why He came. They needed a shepherd-king to lead, guide and care for them. Jesus told His disciples this was God's harvest field, workers were needed and to pray for God to send workers. They became those workers and received God's power to do His work and be carriers of His message to the people: God loved the world and was providing the way of salvation through Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

This work continues in and through all who believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, His Church. Like the crowds of people gathered around Jesus, all people urgently need Jesus and the salvation that comes only through Him. In Christ, we are new creations and His compassion for all people works in us to bring His Good News to them.

As I see, listen to and experience what is happening in the world around me, I can struggle with what to think, say or do. In these times of suffering, turmoil and strife, messages and directives come from many sources. There are calls for action and many voices trying to provide explanation, meaning and direction. But when I go to Jesus and search the Word of God I hear His voice, receive His call and follow Him. I must ask: do I know, love and obey Jesus? Will I obey God's call to leave comfort, a certain lifestyle, or position of praise, status, fame or certain income for the work of His kingdom? Am I praying for God's equipping and sending to His harvest field? Jesus' authority and that given to His disciples was not trusted by the world. Will I trust and follow Jesus even when I am opposed or do not know all circumstances? Do I act in obedience to serve, and tell the message of the Good News of Jesus in and through my thoughts, words and deeds? Do I have His peace and dwell on His Word? Am I one in mind, love, spirit and purpose with Christ and His Church proclaiming one Lord and Savior, who has acted and spoken for all of humanity, and is our only way of salvation?

Father, may we all be disciples of Jesus that follow Him in faith, righteousness, justice, hope and love, serving in the power of the Holy Spirit in your kingdom work. May we joyfully share in the Good News of Jesus, His sufferings and His eternal glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

# A CLASH OF TWO KINGDOMS

**Read John 18:33-37**

Have you ever had someone question your rightful authority? Have you ever given a truthful answer only to be called a liar, ridiculed, lectured, and mocked? Have ill consequences followed someone else's false decision of who you are, your intentions, or your actions? These are gut-wrenching, worst-of-the-worst scenarios. To even think of them may cause a pit your stomach.

I'm sure you, like me, have been amazed at Jesus' ability to claim truth, be ridiculed, and respond in love over and over again in Scripture.

To be honest, these scriptures are really hard for me to read. The death of Jesus appears to be completely outrageous and totally uncalled for. Pilot even admits, *"I find no basis for a charge against him."* Yet the crowd rallied against this claim and put Jesus to death. The only perfect Being to ever walk the Earth.

The world is broken. Somedays it is more glaringly obvious than others. Jesus knew this and knew His mission in response to this. Jesus tells Pilot, *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."*

Jesus knew this moment was coming for His entire earthly life. He knew that He would be put to death and chose to face the Cross, out of love, for us. It turns out to be a beautiful picture of willing, self-sacrifice and unfathomable love: God's gracious grand plan for our salvation.

But is there a more telling picture of the clash of two kingdoms? Our earthly kingdom in relation to the heavenly kingdom? One on display as perceived utter mutiny and the other personified as perfect grace and peace.

How do we as Christians live with a foot in both worlds? How do we fight for fairness now while trusting in God's ultimate plan for both redemption and justice? Perhaps the first step is to fall on our knees in gratitude for the One who paid it all, to respond in reverent worship, and accept the free-gift of salvation that comes from this very Cross.

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**For Reflection:** Reflect on the gift of the Cross and praise God for your salvation. Compare and contrast the words redemption and justice. How do they fit into God's earthly kingdom? How do they fit into God's heavenly kingdom? How do we as humans fit into God's plans for these things?

# HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

**Read Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16**

*"They desire a better country, that is a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:16)*

Some of my favorite stories are about double agents and undercover cops, of simultaneous worlds like Narnia or Stranger Things.

I loved serving in Mali. I was a white, English-speaking, Jesus-follower in a Black, French/Malinké-speaking, Muslim world. My perception of reality was limited and flawed; the world was so much bigger than I could imagine.

Abraham was loosely tethered to his world. He left his known home to go to an unknown place led by an unseen God. He was anchored to an intangible promise of a real country, where he would no longer be a pilgrim wanderer, always seen by others as a stranger, always feeling like an alien. A place planned and built by God—home.

There is an African proverb that captures the reality of missionary life in West Africa: no matter how long a log lies in the river, it will never become a crocodile. No matter how long we lived in Mali or how deeply we entered the culture and way of life, we would never be insiders. When things got tough, we could pull out our passports and leave. Like undercover agents or spies, we would never be fully embedded.

Abraham is central in the Hebrews 11 Faith Hall of Fame because he believed in what he couldn't see. He believed that God had a better country prepared for him and he was prepared to live in pursuit of that promise no matter the cost.

Whatever passport we carry, this world is not our home. *"Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 3:20). We belong to the kingdom of God. When we live in the reality of that promise, trusting it as more real than what we see around us, we please God.

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**For Reflection:** Thank God today for any feelings of not fitting or belonging. Specifically thank Him that you are a citizen of His kingdom. Live in it today and believe in it for tomorrow.

# WINNING BEFORE THE GAME HAS EVEN BEGUN

***Read Revelation 7:9-10***

My high school was something of a baseball powerhouse in Indiana. We had a Hall of Fame coach and a program that started with our Little League system that ultimately led to 9 State Titles (and 2 "National" Titles!).

I will never forget the talk coach gave us before our season began one year. Several player had been complaining that we were "wasting time" talking about things like how to properly wear our hats and uniforms, and the "right way" to take the field before a game. Coach called everyone together and said, "You're part of LaPorte baseball now. A tradition that speaks of excellence. I will tell you there are teams that probably have more talent than us this year. But because we're LaPorte, and they see you do things the LaPorte way, they'll think they've lost before the game even starts."

Looking around at our broken, divided world...it can be hard to see and believe that the kingdom of God is real or that Jesus will ever reign as the Lord promised. But when I read the vision of John shared in Revelation 7:9-10...I realize we've already won.

Jesus is Lord. He is Lord, no matter your political affiliation. He is Lord, no matter the color of your skin. He is Lord, no matter your native tongue. People from every nation, tribe, people and language will stand before the throne and declare *"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

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## WEEK 2 REVIEW AND APPLICATION

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### ***Reflect on Your Discoveries from the Previous Week:***

Based on your reading and reflection this week, what did you discover about the kingdom of God?

What did you discover about yourself?

What questions are you still wondering about after having read the passages this week?

### ***Nurture Growth Through Confession and Repentance:***

As you went through the readings and devotions, where did the Spirit lead you to repentance and faith this week?

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### ***Encourage Each Other Towards Action in Response:***

Share with each other your answers to these questions:

1. In light of what I have discovered about God and myself this week, what is one thing I need to do differently? What steps will I take to implement this change?
2. As a Disciple-Making-Disciple, who am I impacting for Christ? Who am I praying for? How am I introducing them to the kingdom of God?





**If you declare with your mouth,  
“Jesus is Lord,” and  
believe in your heart  
that God raised him  
from the dead,  
you will be saved.**

***Romans 10:9***

## **WEEK 3: THE HOLY SPIRIT**

### **WORSHIP EXPERIENCE RESPONSE**

Use this page to reflect on the worship service you experienced this week. You can include thoughts on the message, the prayers, the music, etc., whatever impacted you the most! Feel free to draw pictures, write poems, prayers or answers—whatever helps you process your worship experience.

- What stood out the most about your worship experience this week? Was there a song that you keep singing, a quote you keep thinking about or a prayer that you needed to hear?
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# UNITY IN THE KINGDOM

**Read Romans 10:8-13**

This is exciting. This is the best news!

The main message here...salvation! The next message...available for all!

The world is filled with really different people who do really different things and think in really different ways. You don't have to search too far to find evidence of that.

In Paul's address he was pointing out that Jews and Gentiles, despite their collection of differences, could have at least one thing in common, salvation! *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"* (Romans 10:13). A universal truth! There are so few things in this life that are applicable and available to all people which makes clinging to these words life (eternity!)—changing and the sharing of this message of utmost importance.

It reminds me of one of the key verses that leads our church. Revelation 7:9 says, *"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb...."*

What a beautiful picture of God's goodness, grace, mercy, love and salvation for each one of His children in every corner of the world. How exciting it will be to see such a diverse group of people worshipping the Lord together. I wonder what that will sound like. I wonder what that will look like. Yet when I think of our large-group, Sunday morning gatherings at Eastbrook I can't help but wonder if that might be a little sneak-peek.

Let's keep our eyes on the prize and not get too distracted by the "minutiae" that may separate us because, praise God, there is something that unites us all—in this kingdom and the next. Our salvation in Jesus Christ.

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## **For Reflection:**

- How does Paul say a person gains salvation? Is that something you desire?
- Paul said, *"The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart..."* How can you make sure to keep the phrase "Jesus is Lord" "in your mouth" and "in your heart"?

# THE JUDGMENT SEAT

**Read Romans 14: 9-19**

*"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." (Romans 14:19)*

I feel like being very honest in this devotion. I have been that person in the judge's seat. I have put myself in that elevated position.

Why? Because I was so very convinced that the person/persons in the judgment seat were in great peril? Yes! YES, but perhaps there was something else in there too, maybe the fact that I just wanted to appear better than...

Better than others, more holy, more Christlike.

But what is Christ like? He is LOVE.

I'll endeavor to tell the story. Our oldest daughter went away to college and started to question everything! She started to experiment with different ideas and faiths. This terrified us! While she was in the midst of searching for who she was she met a man and fell in love. He was not what we had envisioned for our precious daughter. I got up on my seat and became Judge Terri. I won't go into the ugly details, but we lost her and her (now) husband for almost ten years! Just now the Lord has done enough work in all of us that we are starting to see a light at the end of a very dark tunnel. Thank you Lord!

I've been a recipient of judgment too. Living in the Middle East being scrutinized not only for what I am perceived to eat or drink, but what I wear, how I do my hair, what earrings I like....it's a list!

But I have taken great care to learn every possible offense, so that for the most part I can avoid being a negative representation of what a godly woman is. (I'm pretty sure I still make shocking mistakes!)

I guess, this passage says to me that I should give much grace to others and take much care myself. Do not be easily offended, and don't be an offence to others. Be humble, Terri...what's that huge thing in your eye?

Verse 19 says, *"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification."*

I need God's help in this.

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# HUNGRY FOR MORE

**Read Philippians 3:17-4:1**

Have you ever had a night out planned and that's all you can think about all day? I remember when my wife, Mary Ann, and I were dating, we had a favorite restaurant we would go to occasionally. It was called Joe Armelie's Meating Place (yes Meating place not Meeting place) and I loved their prime rib. It was a journey to get there, and not the cheapest place we could go, but the food and service was worth the extra effort. On the days when I knew we were planning to go there, I would find my mind drifting and anticipating the experience. I could hardly wait.

Living in the kingdom of God means allowing our minds to be preoccupied with thoughts of God and His will. Hear the words of Paul describing the contrast between those whose citizenship is tied up with this earth versus those of us that are citizens of the kingdom of God:

*"Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await our savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who...will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body."* (Philippians 3:19-21)

Now, I admit there were days I was preoccupied dreaming of prime rib, but as a citizen of heaven, what I really hunger and thirst for is the return of Christ, my King.

As human beings with families and jobs and countless responsibilities in our lives, we have to think about the affairs of this world, but they must never become our driving motivation, our hunger or our passions. As citizens of God's kingdom, we deal with the issues of this world as part of serving Him, bringing Him glory, seeking our ultimate satisfaction in Him.

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# CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

## **Read Colossians 1:9-23**

*"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves." (Colossians 1:13)*

This passage tells a story: people trapped in a dangerous realm, rescued by an incredible Savior, and granted citizenship in the "kingdom of light." I've never experienced a change of nationality, but I'm learning about it through volunteering at the International Community Center. The route to U.S. "naturalization" provides some interesting parallels to spiritual citizenship.

The ICC's clients are refugees who fled danger, oppression, and hardship in places like Myanmar and Somalia. After living in an interim country for a number of years, they were selected for possible admission into the U.S., then screened to prevent the entrance of enemies, criminals, and abusers.

But they are not citizens! To gain that status, they have to earn it: living here at least 5 years, mastering basic English (speaking, reading, writing), and learning key aspects of U.S. history and government. They pay a substantial application fee and undergo further screening. It's hard work; whenever an ICC client passes the citizenship tests, it's cause for celebration!

Like the refugees, we needed to be rescued, delivered from Satan's domain of darkness where we were trapped in our sin. But there the similarity ends. We would not have passed any screening tests for entrance to the "kingdom of light." In fact, Paul says that we were "enemies" because of our "evil behavior"! And we were not capable of earning our citizenship. Instead we receive it as a gift, for it is only through God's plan and Christ's blood that anyone can qualify: redeemed, reconciled, "without blemish and free from accusation."

There's another contrast: After our ICC friends swear allegiance to the U.S., we hope they'll be enthusiastic citizens by voting and contributing to their community, though no one actively helps them do so. In God's kingdom, we should desire to be active citizens—and we have the Spirit's help to give knowledge and strength for "every good work"!

The refugees are starting over in a strange culture and climate here, but they are extremely grateful to be safe and have rights. How much more can we be "giving joyful thanks" to God for our new citizenship!

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# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

## Read I Peter 2:9-12

*"...they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (I Peter 2:12)*

Growing up with a little brother afforded me the "rights and privileges" of being the big brother. To my shame, I remember calling my little brother names—names that were meant to hurt, belittle, or provoke, not to build up. Names wound and names marginalize. Sometimes words and names are used to cause the target of those words to question WHO they are—their very identity.

The apostle Peter writes to the church in Asia Minor knowing his hearers are living under the fire of an oppressive society. These Christ-followers are needing to be reminded of WHO they are. Peter addresses his audience with identifying descriptors: *"chosen people," "royal priesthood," "holy nation," "God's special possession," "dear friends,"* and *"foreigners and exiles."* He uses collective nouns to underscore the corporate identity of his listeners.

Seen often as social misfits, early Christians (known as "people of the name") faced daunting living insecurities including slander, boycott, character defamation, mob-violence, and even death. Peter calls his readers to live circumspect and holy lives that refute the false accusations (name calling?) hurled at them as they live as foreigners and exiles in the Roman Empire. For first century believers, a Christ-honoring lifestyle flows from a Christocentric identity as *"God's special possession."*

In 2003 my wife and I completed 10 years living in Mali, West Africa. At that time church leaders came to us requesting that we greet the church in the West on their behalf. For the small Mali church, making up 2% of the country's population, its identity was that of being grafted into a wider relational connection with the holy nation of Christ's global church. To live such good lives (v. 12) as a minority Christian community in Mali necessitated the church knowing its true identity as God's chosen people in spite of being foreigners and exiles in their religious context.

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**For Reflection:** How are we—corporately as Eastbrook Church and as individuals—seen by our world in these polarized days? Are we living such good lives that reflect our true identity as God's holy nation (GRK – "ethnos") (v. 9)?

## WEEK 3 REVIEW AND APPLICATION

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**But you are a chosen people,  
a royal priesthood, a holy nation,  
God's special possession,  
that you may declare the praises of  
him who called you out of darkness  
into his wonderful light.**

**Once you were not a people,  
but now you are the people of God;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.**

***1 Peter 2:9-10***

## **WEEK 4: THE KINGDOM OF GOD VS. THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD WORSHIP EXPERIENCE RESPONSE**

Use this page to reflect on the worship service you experienced this week. You can include thoughts on the message, the prayers, the music, etc., whatever impacted you the most! Feel free to draw pictures, write poems, prayers or answers—whatever helps you process your worship experience.

- What stood out the most about your worship experience this week? Was there a song that you keep singing, a quote you keep thinking about or a prayer that you needed to hear?
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# THE POWER OF PRAYER

**Read 1 Timothy 2:1-8**

In high school I had an acquaintance who wasn't very nice to me. I remember sitting right behind her in math one day when she was telling a friend about how ugly I was. To justify her comments to her friend, who had started to defend me, she told her stories about me that were not true at all! It continued for the rest of high school, and I avoided her at all costs.

A couple years after college, I ran into her at a coffee shop in our hometown. I wasn't thrilled, but she kept looking my way, so I asked God to help me and said hi. I was skeptical at first, but she had obviously grown. She acknowledged that we didn't get along in high school, apologized for how she'd treated me, and wanted to know how I had been. She was so genuine! She told me how God had truly changed her heart since high school. And here I was, years later, and how much had God changed me? I was still holding a 7-year-old grudge.

In 1 Timothy chapter 1, Paul reminds Timothy about his own past. He calls himself a *"blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man"* (verse 13) but, like my friend, he was shown the mercy and grace of God through Jesus Christ, who has *"immense patience"* for sinners (verse 16). And this is where he starts chapter 2, telling Timothy to pray for all people, especially our authorities and leaders.

I don't know about you, but some of my feelings about politicians or even certain Facebook friends right now are much stronger than a high school grudge. But we are commanded to pray for our leaders. Even the ones we don't agree with. As citizens of the kingdom of God, we can expect and hope in Jesus' grace and power to transform.

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## **For Reflection:**

- Has God ever done a work on someone beyond what you expected or imagined? (You, perhaps?)
- Is there someone you just don't expect God to change? Ask God to remind you what He has done and what He can do.
- Spend some time praying for people you have a hard time with—petition for them, intercede for them, and thank God for them.

## **GO WITH GOD**

### **Read Daniel 6:1-28 and Acts 5:29**

After the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter and several other apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people in Jerusalem and preached about Jesus. The existing religious rulers felt jealous and threatened. The Sanhedrin angrily reminded the apostles that they had been given strict instructions by the high priest not to teach in Jesus' name. But the apostles had heard from a higher authority and thus came back with, *"We must obey God rather than human beings."* It's not that Peter and the others disrespected human authorities. But when there was a conflict between what human beings said and what God said, they were always going to go with God.

Daniel found himself in a similar situation during the Jewish exile under King Darius. Because of his excellent character and high work ethic, he was rising in status in the kingdom. But other leaders were jealous of him and wanted to bring him down. They knew they wouldn't be able to trip him up in unethical behavior like stealing, lying, sexual immorality, drunkenness, etc., so they tried something more insidious. They convinced their weak king to publish a decree that they knew Daniel would never obey because of his integrity. And you know the rest – the king threw Daniel in a den with hungry lions who completely ignored him. That was God's power at work!

Read Romans 13:1. How do we reconcile this verse with Acts 5:29? Good question. We need to remember first that we are all sinners, and left to our own devices would destroy ourselves and one another. The history of the human race has not been pretty. God has instituted governing structures in our world by His grace and for our benefit, so we need to respect them. But when these authorities demand we do something clearly contrary to God's word, we must go with God. Whose approval matters more than God's?

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#### **For Reflection:**

- What if Daniel had given in and prayed to King Darius, rationalizing that his prayer would just be empty words on his part?
- How did Daniel's obedience give God an opportunity to show His power?
- Can you today simply obey God and trust Him for the results?

# WHOSE AUTHORITY?

***Read Romans 13:1-7***

What do you hear when you read a verse like Romans 13:1? It reads, *"There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."*

Now we all know that there are some very difficult questions to be answered here. When it says again in verse 1 that "there is no authority except from God," does it include evil rulers? When it says in verse 3 that the civil authorities are "not a terror to good conduct, but to bad," is that always true? What are we to make of Paul's seemingly absolute statements?

This text has implications for laws and law enforcement, political activism and civil disobedience, elections and protesting, mask wearing and social distancing. This is not a small or simple text.

The plain reading of the text is clear. Submit to civil authority 1) because it's instituted by God, 2) because it is good for you that there is civil authority, 3) because you will get punished if you don't, and 4) because if you don't, your conscience will condemn you for breaking the higher law of God.

Now, I imagine you, like me, jump to the "buts."  
"But our leaders are morally corrupt."  
"But that law is stupid!"

Paul says submit to the government out of reverence for God—not reverence for the ruler. That's what verse one means. They are not God. God is God. When you submit, you submit for God's sake.

I believe that Paul writes in such absolutes ("Be subject to the governing authorities.") not because he believes that every government all the time is perfect and will do right (remember – he's living in a time when the Roman government was killing Christians because of their allegiance to Jesus- but because he is more concerned with our humility, self-denial and trust in Christ, than he is about our civil liberties. In other words, Paul risked being misunderstood on the side of submission because he saw pride as a greater danger to Christians and our salvation than government injustice.

Both matter: civil liberties and social justice on the one hand, and personal faith and humility and self-denial, on the other. But in Paul's mind, faith, humility and self-denial are vastly more important for the Christian than that we be treated well by the government.

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## TWO SIDES OF A COIN

**Read Matthew 22:15-22**

I imagine yesterday's reading and thoughts left you with some uneasiness, some discontent. As residents of God's kingdom, clearly we can see that the governments and authorities of this world can often be at odds with the priorities of God. How do we "submit to their authority" while standing for God's values at the same time?

I believe our text today helps us wrestle with that question.

*"He took a coin and held it up and said, 'Whose image is on the coin?' They said, 'Caesar's.' He said, 'All right, then give to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar; but give to God the things that belong to God,'" (Matthew 22:20-21).*

By this Jesus clearly indicated that there are limits to the power of government. Caesar has his image on certain things; therefore they belong to him—Jesus affirms that. What Caesar put his image on belongs to Caesar. The implication is that governments have authority over what we do with our property and how we behave with one another as part of a nation.

But Jesus also clearly indicates they have no right to touch what God has put His image on, meaning our hearts and souls. Remember what Genesis 1:27 says, *"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them."*

We are "stamped" in the image of God.

Rulers are under God; therefore they have no right to command men to do what God says shouldn't be done, or to command men not to do what God says should be done. When there is a conflict between the ways of man and the ways of God, God reigns. Period.

Governments are not to enslave people, because we belong to God. Governments are not to oppress people, because we bear the image of God. What bears God's image must be given to God, not to Caesar.

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# WALKING THE TIGHTROPE

**Read Colossians 2:6-12**

As a Christian artist my influences are often found in Scripture. The tight-rope of walking within the world but not being of the world is difficult to navigate, especially as an artist. Colossians 2:6 says *"And now just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him."*

It's a daily choice to follow the Lord and it's not just saying some words and then going on your merry way.

Continuing on to verses 7-12:

*"Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world rather than from Christ. For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority."*

The outside world may seem so enticing, but remember as the Word of God lives and breathes in our lives, we are part of something greater than ourselves. Mathew 16 24:25 says *"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.'"*

As we live in this world, we are often called to die to ourselves, to die to things that are not meant for us because God has called us to something greater.

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**For Reflection:** How are you feeling the world's influence on your life? What things can you die to in your life?

## WEEK 4 REVIEW AND APPLICATION

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**Finally, be strong in the Lord  
and in his mighty power.  
Put on the full armor of God,  
so that you can take your stand  
against the devil's schemes.  
For our struggle is not against flesh  
and blood, but against the rulers,  
against the authorities,  
against the powers of this dark world  
and against the spiritual forces of  
evil in the heavenly realms.**

***Ephesians 6:10-12***

## **WEEK 5: FAITH-FULL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORSHIP EXPERIENCE RESPONSE**

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# THE NEED TO BE RIGHT

**Read Romans 12:9-21**

Can I be honest with you? The state of our country makes me sad, anxious, and angry. Maybe you resonate with those emotions. I see the division that politics is promoting not only in our country, but inside of the church. In my finite mind I can't see a solution to bring people across the divide, and it breaks my heart.

This list that Paul gives us in Romans 12 is a tall order, and frankly in my humanness, I get a little annoyed. I get annoyed, because I, Lisa Kay Galloway, can't achieve this list! I get annoyed because I put on the facade of listening to others, acting like I am an open minded person, when in the end I just want to be right and prove the other wrong. I get discouraged when I see brothers and sisters in Christ withholding empathy in discourse over social media, at the family table, and in friend groups. Communion with one another is diminishing. Have we traded the image of God in each other for the need to be right?

You probably are already thinking "I see where this is heading...we can't do any of this in our own strength but have to rely on the strength of God." And yes...in so many words yes.

Let me challenge you with verse 12: *"Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying"* (Romans 12:12 NLT). As you enter into conversations (real conversations, without the agenda to be right), how will you rejoice in our confident hope? How will you be patient in trouble? Are you praying for God to guide and lead you in this divisive political season?

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**For Reflection:** Respond in prayer using these words or your own. Dear Jesus, teach me how to *"be one as You and the Father are one,"* with my brothers and sisters, who may look, think, and come to different conclusions than me. Forgive me for the times I have not represented you well as I navigate this divisive political season. Lord, have mercy on us. In humility and love, may I walk in your ways. Amen.

# WAR AND PEACE

***Read Ephesians 6:10-20***

When I was a kid I used to love playing war. I remember one summer finding the perfect stick to be my sword. It had a swelled area at one end that looked just like a sword grip and it had been broken in such a way that the tip looked like a blade.

Oh, the battles I fought that summer. With a pot lid as my shield and my “sword” in hand I protected my kingdom from all invaders. Yeah...I was that kid.

My brother, 6 years older than me, used to make fun of me running around our yard swinging my stick around. “Who do you think you’re fighting this time, Sir Geeks-a-Lot?”

Every time I read Ephesians 6, my heart starts pumping strong: armor, swords, shields. Maybe not the type I imagined (I mean really, who would use a book as a sword, there’s not a pointy end!), but weapons of war none-the-less.

Our world today seems constantly at war. At war over ideas, over words, over rights, over political opinions. But at some point we have to stop and ask, “Who is our real enemy? What should we really be at war against?”

Paul makes it clear our real battle is not against each other, but against the forces of spiritual evil, against the things that enslave us to sin and eternal death.

The weapons and armor of God—His Word, His truth, His righteousness, His gospel, His faith, His salvation—they are weapons designed to end the wars within and without. They bring us peace. Peace with God and peace with one another.

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# PEACEABLE KINGDOM

***Read Titus 3:1-11***

If we watch closely enough, our kids can reveal a deeper understanding of Scripture in the mundane parts of life. Take board games for example. My kids started out with learning the board games that survived my youth. We were excited to try Uno, Connect Four, Candy Land and Chutes and Ladders. Classics that brought many memories. But also many lessons about winning and losing.

Enter Peaceable Kingdoms, a series of games that are focused on the players collaborating to win the game together, not against one another. We were given several by a family member, and the difference in how we played was insightful to watch unfold with my kids. Competition turned to cooperation and teamwork. A drive to bury the other player was replaced by a willingness to submit or sacrifice for another so the whole group can win.

Now, I know kids need to learn how to win/lose, and those classic games are still in the mix at our home, but this isn't about parenting styles. The passage in Titus is about a lifestyle in the public square.

It is a lifestyle shift from seeking self-advancement, pushing away/down another group of people, endless debates, or partisan political fighting. It is about living in a peaceable manner that positions you to do good for all. (And sometimes doing good for all, means focusing on a few, to help the whole.)

But, it is hard to be good to someone from a distance, and it is even more difficult to know what is good without proximity. Praise God for His example found in the incarnation of Christ. A lifestyle of being faithfully present, in the midst of the hardest places in our world, bringing with Him the kingdom and His peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, self-control and love.

Take a moment to reflect on what our city, nation and world would look like if Christ's followers would gently and humbly carry the Holy Spirit of grace, peace and goodness into the broken and hurting corners of our city, nation and world. What would it look like for the church? What would it look like for you?

May such a Peaceable Kingdom come.

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# A KINGDOM APPROACH TO CONFLICT

**Read 2 Timothy 2:22-26**

This passage is both beautifully and powerfully written. Paul uses strong language at the beginning of these verses, *"Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments..."*, he warns Timothy.

The middle of the text suggests a different way for him to communicate. Paul uses the words "teach," "gently instruct," "kind," and "not resentful." Paul explained that one approach likely leads to "quarrels" and the other has a better chance of leading people to *"the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth..."*

I think an important distinction to make here is that Paul isn't telling Timothy to avoid having controversial conversations but rather giving him a guide on how to engage in them. One is brash, perhaps someone just wanting to vent, blow off steam, make their opinion known, or even get into an argument just for the sake of getting into an argument. Although there is much value in expressing your deepest feelings in a very real way, perhaps this type of communication is saved for your close confidants as its primary beneficiary is you.

When desiring to lead people who "oppose" you toward Christ, Paul is advocating for the approach of a teacher. Someone who communicates wholly with the other person's education in mind. It avoids the "I'm right and you're wrong" type of thinking and replaces it with, "Here, let me show you why this makes sense" school of thought.

How will we draw souls closer to the kingdom or guide people toward our point of view? Brash bashing or kind and gentle instruction? Don't stray from the Word but let's commit to a thoughtful delivery of it!

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## **For Reflection:**

- These things are easy to agree with on paper but when your buttons are pushed and your blood starts to boil, how do you stay in others-focused-education mode with your actions and words?
- Take some time to think about specific topics or people that may tempt you to "lose your cool" and make a plan for how you will manage that interaction and respond in an edifying way.



## SUB • MISSION

**James 4:1-12**

This week, we have been talking about what it means to be kingdom people in a divided world. It's fitting that this is the last Scripture passage for the whole devotional because James has both a great summary and a great challenge for us as it relates to being kingdom people: *submit to God*.

James writes that we are to submit our whole selves to God (v. 7). Not just our motives, but our whole selves. Not only our plans and our politics and our opinions and our votes, but our whole selves!

A professor once explained the word "submission" to me this way: submission means putting your mission under (sub) the mission of another.

Humility is wrapped up in submission; you can't have one without the other. I don't know about you, but I look around the world, the Internet, the church, and even my own community and I see more fighting and quarreling than ever before. I see the slander James talks about in verse 11, I see the judgment James talks about in verses 11-12, I see the self-serving motives James talks about in verses 1-3, and I see the pride James talks about throughout this passage. If I'm honest, I see these things in myself as well.

What would it look like for me to seek first to be a friend of God, to seek first the mission of God, to seek first the heart of God, to seek first the love of God? To set down my plans, and my beliefs and my agenda, and pick up the plans, beliefs, and agendas of the kingdom of God? To acknowledge that any allegiance I make to a tribe, tongue, or nation pales in comparison to the allegiance I pledge to Christ (Revelation 7:9-10)?

I think James gives us an insight into what this might look like. It might look like taking time to come clean before God and others, to purify our hearts, to become single-minded about Kingdom issues. To grieve, mourn, and wail, to become serious and humble. To forgive and to let things go. To be willing to be wrong, to set down our gavel and step down off of the seat of judgment.

Kingdom people are people who are on mission for God first. Eastbrook, let's set down our missions and place them under the mission of God. Let's be Kingdom people on the journey together.

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**For Reflection:** What stood out to you in this passage from James? What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to set down in order to live on mission for God? How can a diverse community like Eastbrook maintain what makes us different without being divided? How does James address this?

## WEEK 5 REVIEW AND APPLICATION

Use this page either by yourself, with one or two other people or with your Small Group to reflect on how this week's readings have impacted you.

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### ***Reflect on Your Discoveries from the Previous Week:***

Based on your reading and reflection this week, what did you discover about the kingdom of God?

What did you discover about yourself?

What questions are you still wondering about after having read the passages this week?

### ***Nurture Growth Through Confession and Repentance:***

As you went through the readings and devotions, where did the Spirit lead you to repentance and faith this week?

Spend time praying for others and for the Holy Spirit to help us have faith in the forgiveness and grace of God.

### ***Encourage Each Other Towards Action in Response:***

Share with each other your answers to these questions:

1. In light of what I have discovered about God and myself this week, what is one thing I need to do differently? What steps will I take to implement this change?
2. As a Disciple-Making-Disciple, who am I impacting for Christ? Who am I praying for? How am I introducing them to the kingdom of God?

# SPECIAL THANKS

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## ***Works Cited***

1. All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted. *The Holy Bible*, New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan House, 2011.



One of the greatest themes of the Bible is the kingdom of God. That theme weaves throughout the entire Bible, tying the Old and New Testaments together around the reality that God is King.

Jesus began his ministry in Mark's Gospel by proclaiming: *"The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"* (Mark 1:15). But what does the kingdom of God mean for us today where we live and with what we face? Particularly, how do we navigate being *"in the world"* but not *"of the world"* (John 17:14-18) when it comes to living the kingdom in our everyday lives and the world around us?

With our present cultural moment more polarized than ever, we need to regain our footing in the fullness of God's kingdom that orients us toward God as King, Jesus as Lord, and the Spirit as present in the church. Join us as we explore the nature of the kingdom of God with specific application to faith and our world today.

