

LifeGroup Study
2023-10-29
YOU ARE WHAT YOU LOVE
In Love With the Ending
Leader Notes



OVERVIEW:

Welcome back to our LifeGroup study, You Are What You Love. Today's study is called *In Love with the Ending*. Everyone is aiming at a believed or envisioned telos (fulfillment, goal, ultimate end). As followers of Jesus, we want to be aiming at and animated by Jesus' vision of the good life which he calls life in the kingdom of God. This is life with God. It's the life we were created to live. The goal of this study is that we would be captured by a vision of the kingdom and its king. That vision can help us cultivate our lives to grow our love for Jesus and his kingdom through the liturgies we live.

ICEBREAKER: My Big Goal

When I was a young adult I had a big goal. My big goal was to attend a Christian college where I could get training in the Bible. My goal was realized in 1989 when I packed up my things and made the long drive from my home in London Ontario to Toccoa, Georgia to attend Toccoa Falls College! How about you? What big goal have you set in your life? How did things go with achieving your goal? **Share your story with the group!**

STUDY:

Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love. So discipleship is more a matter of hungering and thirsting than of knowing and believing. Jesus's command to follow him is a command to align our loves and longings with his—to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and crave a world where he is all in all—a vision encapsulated by the shorthand “the kingdom of God.” - Smith, James K. A.. You Are What You Love (p. 2). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Every liturgy, rhythm, routine, habit that we participate in has an implicit vision of flourishing built into it. In other words, every liturgy has an end goal, an ultimate good built into it. For followers of Jesus, our big goal is to fall in love with the ending – the Kingdom of God. For today's study we'll grow our love for God's kingdom by getting to know the attributes of the kingdom of God.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. The kingdom of God is **eternal**.

READ: Daniel 2:44

⁴⁴ “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. NIV

READ: 2 Peter 1:11

¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. NIV

- **Why is it a big deal that the kingdom of God is eternal?**

- **What does this mean for you and me?**

LEADER NOTES:

As we look at the attributes of the kingdom of God, part of the goal is that your group members would see the incredible worth of the kingdom and value of orienting our life toward living for the kingdom and loving the King. The kingdom of God has incredible worth because it is eternal. It has no beginning or end, as it is rooted in God's everlasting nature and purpose. It transcends time and history, and it will never be destroyed or corrupted. Because the kingdom of God is eternal, we can have confidence that the kingdom we are part of will endure anything we experience in life. You are part of God's unshakable kingdom!

2. The kingdom of God is **spiritual**

READ: John 18:36

³⁶ Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.” NIV

READ: Romans 14:17

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, NIV

- **How does the fact that Jesus’ kingdom is spiritual make it different from other kingdoms?**
- **How does Romans 14:17 help us see how to orient our lives toward this kingdom?**

LEADER NOTES:

The kingdom of God is spiritual. It is not a physical or geographical realm, but a realm of the heart and the mind, where God’s Spirit dwells and reigns. It is not dependent on human institutions or structures, but on God’s power and grace. Romans 14:17 shows us that we orient our lives toward this kingdom as we love like Jesus loves and live like He lived. There is something more important than what we eat or drink and all the physical things and concerns of this life. God’s kingdom transcends the physical and orients us to love God and others from the heart.

3. The kingdom of God is **universal**.

READ: Psalm 103:19

“The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.” NIV

READ: Colossians 1:13-14

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. NIV

- **What does it mean that the kingdom of God is universal?**
- **What impact does being in this universal kingdom have in our lives?**

LEADER NOTES:

The universal kingdom of God encompasses all creation and all people, regardless of their race, nationality, gender, or status. It is open to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ and submits to his lordship. It is not limited by any boundaries or barriers. Being a part of this universal kingdom has a profound impact in our lives. Colossians 1 tells us that we have been rescued from a false kingdom (the “dominion of darkness”) and brought into the kingdom of Jesus. We have been bought with a

price (the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross) and as a result, our sins are forgiven. We are now members of God's eternal, beautiful kingdom!

4. The kingdom of God is **dynamic**.

READ: Mark 4:26-32

²⁶ He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

³⁰ Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

READ: Matthew 13:33

³³ He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds^[a] of flour until it worked all through the dough." NIV

- **Why do you think Jesus would use parables about things like seed and yeast to describe the kingdom of God?**

- **How might these parables help you appreciate how God is at work in your life?**

LEADER NOTES: Jesus used parables about things like seed and yeast to help us see that the kingdom of God is dynamic. It is not a static or stagnant reality, but a growing and expanding one. It is constantly advancing and transforming the world and the lives of people. It is like a seed that sprouts and bears fruit, or like a leaven that permeates and changes the whole dough. Like the seed and yeast in Jesus' parables, God is working out his kingdom in you, growing you by the power of His Spirit to be more and more like his Son, Jesus.

5. The kingdom of God is **righteous**.

READ: Matthew 6:10

"your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." NIV

READ: Isaiah 9:7

“Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” NIV

- **Why would Jesus pray, “Your kingdom come ...”?**
- **How does this attribute of God’s kingdom (righteous) make it beautiful and attractive to us?**

LEADER NOTES:

When Jesus taught us to pray, He included the petition – “Your kingdom come.” This prayer expresses our desire that God’s kingdom would continue to grow and expand in our world, that his rule would continue to be established and grow in the hearts of people. The kingdom is characterized by God’s justice and holiness. It is a place where sin and evil are overcome and where righteousness and peace prevail. These things make God’s kingdom beautiful and attractive to us, a kingdom well worth orienting our life’s direction.

6. The kingdom of God is **blessed**.

READ: Matthew 5:3-12

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. NIV

READ: Revelation 21:4

⁴ “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death^[a] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” NIV

- **What does it mean that the kingdom of God is blessed?**
- **How have you experienced God's blessing recently?**

LEADER NOTES:

Jesus describes the kingdom of God as a kingdom that is blessed and that brings blessing to its citizens. God's kingdom is a source of joy and happiness for those who belong to it. It is a place where God's presence and favor are experienced and enjoyed. It is a place where every need is met and every desire is fulfilled. It is a place where there is no more sorrow or pain, but only life and love. As citizens of God's kingdom, we get to experience some of the blessings of the kingdom now. As Jesus reminds us in Mathew 5, kingdom blessings can flow from the trials we experience in this life. The blessings of God's kingdom will be fully realized in our lives when we stand before our King (see Revelation 21:4)

7. Think back through the attributes of God's kingdom we have studied. As you think about growing your love of God's kingdom, **which of these attributes is particularly significant for you? How might you focus in on this attribute of God's kingdom this week?**

KING JESUS

The kingdom we have been learning about today is ruled by a king - King Jesus. Orienting our lives to love God's kingdom is ultimately about growing our love and loyalty to our King.

8. READ: John 18:36-37

³⁶ Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

³⁷ "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." NIV

- In his trial before Pilate, Jesus talks about the kingdom of God and his role as king. **Why would this have been so radical in Jesus' time?**
- **What does it mean to you to love and follow Jesus as your King?**

LEADER NOTES: In Jesus time, and in ours, there are many competing kingdoms. When Jesus stood before Pilate, the Jewish leaders had accused Him of being a rival king to Rome. For Jesus to proclaim another kingdom over which He is king would have been radical to Pilate, a man who had oriented his

life around the kingdom of Rome. What does it mean to love and follow King Jesus? It means to orient our lives, our habits and heart, toward following our King.

PRAY:

The Lord's Prayer is a wonderful expression of allegiance to King Jesus. Pray this prayer out loud together as a group.

⁹ "Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,^[a]
but deliver us from the evil one.^[b]

Matthew 6:9-13 NIV