

LifeGroup Study
2024-05-12
SKEPTICS WELCOME
The Christian Worldview is Irrelevant
Leader Notes

OVERVIEW: Welcome back to our series, Skeptics Welcome, where we have been looking at common doubts or objections skeptics have to the Christian faith and how we can respond. For the final week of our LifeGroup study for this series, we are looking at this objection – The Christian Worldview is Irrelevant. The Christian narrative is not just about hope after death but about a Kingdom that is here and now. It's hope for today and the future. Followers of Jesus are called to live as disciples of the Kingdom. For this study, we'll focus on what God's Kingdom is and how to live as members of the Kingdom of God.

ICEBREAKER: Living with Focus

Think of someone in your life who you would say lives with focus. This is a person who has a plan for how they live and that plan is obvious to those around them. The focus could be anything that comes to your mind – someone who is focused on being healthy physically, someone focused on being generous to others, someone focused on growing themselves through school or mentoring. What is it about this person's focus that inspires you? **Share your story with the group!**

STUDY:

1. **When you hear the words, "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven", what comes to mind?**

LEADER NOTE: Your group members will likely have a variety of things that come to mind when they hear - "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven". Part of the goal of this study is that we would think more about the kingdom of God and its importance to us as followers of Jesus.

Ask someone in the group to read the following out loud to the group.

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The Kingdom of God is a central theme in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament. It appears more than 80 times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. While the exact term is not found in the Old Testament, the concept of God's Kingdom is expressed similarly there.

Definition:

The Kingdom of God is not primarily about physical space or territory but rather about kingly rule, reign, and sovereign control. It represents the everlasting realm where God is sovereign, and Jesus Christ rules forever. In this kingdom, God's authority is recognized, and His will is obeyed.

- The Kingdom of God is the dynamic reign of God over heaven and earth; all things visible and invisible.
- God's present spiritual reign over His people (Colossians 1:13) and Jesus' future reign in the new creation (Revelation 20).
- The range of God's effective will, where what God wants done is done. – Dallas Willard

2. If you were to describe the Kingdom of God in one sentence, how would you define it?

READ Luke 4:43

But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." NIV

- 3. Jesus said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God ..." What does this tell us about the central focus of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' teachings?**

LEADER NOTE: Jesus' teaching and ministry was focused around the kingdom of God. Jesus came to announce that God's power and presence, his kingdom rule, had come to humanity in Him.

JESUS' KINGDOM TEACHINGS

Jesus emphasized the Kingdom of God in His teachings:

- **John the Baptist:** He announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 3:2).
- **Jesus Himself:** He preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17, Mark 4:14-15).
- **Parables:** Jesus used parables to reveal secrets about the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:11).
- **Prayer:** He encouraged His followers to pray for the coming of the Kingdom (Matthew 6:10).
- **Jesus last words:** (Acts 1:1-3) - Jesus' last words before ascension to heaven. Notice the kingdom theme as the main theme.

4. Why did Jesus emphasize the Kingdom of God in his teachings?

LEADER NOTE: Jesus emphasized the Kingdom of God in his teachings to help his followers to live as disciples in his kingdom.

READ Matthew 13:3-9 The Parable of the Four Soils

- 5. According to Jesus, what do the different things in this parable represent? Which details remain the same and which change?**

LEADER NOTE: The message of the kingdom does not change. It is the soil, or the hearers of the message that are different.

- 6. What do you think is the main point of this parable? How is this different from the view of the kingdom that was common in Jesus' day?**

LEADER NOTE: The main point is simply the kingdom can be resisted. This differed from the view of the 1st century Jews. They saw the kingdom as something that forcefully overthrew everything in its way. So it would be impossible for anyone to resist. This teaching on the kingdom would have been totally different for the original hearers.

7. Do you find the truth illustrated in this parable difficult to believe? Why or why not? **How have you experience this truth in your own life?**

LEADER NOTE: This truth should be easy for us to believe as people who have seen people reject the message of the Kingdom. All of us have experienced this personally at some level as we have resisted the call of Jesus in our lives. God does not force anyone to believe. All of us have the freedom to reject or accept the message of the Kingdom of God in our lives.

Questions 5 -7 and the leader notes are sourced from Kingdom of God series by Marlene Nathan.

ALREADY AND NOT YET

The picture you get in the Gospels as Jesus unfolds the teachings of the Kingdom is that it is both present and it is still future. In fact, this is what he means when he says that the mystery of the Kingdom is here — presence without consummation.

For example, you can hear the future dimension of the Kingdom in the Lord's Prayer: "Your kingdom come" ([Matthew 6:10](#)). We should pray that every day. Bring the Kingdom, Lord. It's not here the way we want it to be. Bring your Kingdom. Bring your reign fully in people's lives, in my life, in the world.

8. **What do you think of this idea that we should pray regularly for God's Kingdom to come? What might this look like in your prayer life?**

In [Luke 19:11](#), Jesus proceeded to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem, but the people supposed that the Kingdom of God was to appear immediately. But Jesus knew it was not coming immediately. The Kingdom of God is not going to appear immediately, and yet repeatedly, Jesus says, "The Kingdom is at hand. Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand."

In fact, he is more explicit than that in [Luke 11:20](#): "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." Even more explicitly, [Luke 17:21](#) says, "Behold, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

How can the Kingdom of God be both *not yet present* and *already present*? He says, "Pray for it. It's coming. It's not yet here. It's not going to be immediate, and yet already, it's present in your midst, upon you, at hand." How can he say all that?

The answer is, the Kingdom of God is God's reign — his sovereign action in the world to redeem and deliver a people and then at a future time finish it and renew his people and the universe completely.

9. What does it mean that the Kingdom is already and not yet here?

10. What is a key takeaway for you from the study about the Kingdom of God?

PRAYER:

For your prayer time, thank God for his Kingdom He is building in your life and in the world. Ask Him for wisdom and power to live well as citizens of his Kingdom.