

THE KINGDOM *OF HEAVEN*

unit 25 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus told parables to describe the nature of God's kingdom on earth. No earthly kingdom is like God's kingdom, a kingdom of exceeding value. When Jesus returns, we will experience the fullness of God's kingdom.

TREASURE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Matthew 13

THE KINGDOM IS GROWING

MATTHEW 13:31-33

31 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." 33 He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

THE KINGDOM IS PRICELESS

MATTHEW 13:44-46

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

MAIN POINT.

Nothing has more worth than God's kingdom.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

CHURCH AND KINGDOM

The church and the kingdom of God are closely related, though not identical.

When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is referring to God's reign in the world. The church is the people of God who live under His loving rule now, anticipating the fullness of God's kingdom in the future.

The church's mission is to share about God's kingdom, proclaiming God's message of salvation through Jesus and demonstrating the power of the gospel through good works so that others may be brought to live under God's reign.

DISCUSSION

THE KINGDOM IS GROWING

MATTHEW 13:31-33

- Why do you think Jesus used the image of a seed to describe the kingdom of God? What does it help us know about God's kingdom?
- How is God's kingdom unlike earthly kingdoms? How would you describe it today?
- How can we help grow the kingdom of God? What holds us back from doing this?

THE KINGDOM IS PRICELESS

MATTHEW 13:44-46

- What makes something priceless? Why is God's kingdom a priceless treasure?
- Why should our lives reflect that God's kingdom is priceless to us? Where do you struggle with this?
- Why should the kingdom of God give you joy, like the men in the parable felt for their treasures?



HOW CAN YOU PRIORITIZE GOD'S KINGDOM OVER WORLDLY KINGDOMS IN YOUR DAILY LIFE? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT FOLLOWING JESUS IS MOST IMPORTANT?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

What do you treasure—really treasure? Here's how to know: Look at how you live; look at what consumes your time, your attention, your devotion; look at what you protect. We may say that we treasure our relationship with God because it feels like the right thing to say. But our lives reveal our greatest treasure. Do they show that we love Jesus? For believers, treasuring the Lord will conflict with what the world says is important. Our identity first comes from belonging to God's kingdom, not worldly ones. We can easily lose sight of this and think the best treasures in life are the teams we are on, the clubs or friend groups we are a part of, or the possessions we own; however, we can do nothing more significant with our lives than faithfully living as citizens of God's kingdom, growing in our relationship with the Lord, and pointing others to Him. If the Lord is our greatest treasure, then our love for Him will show up in every part of our lives.



DAY ONE

MATTHEW 13:10-16



Most of us have a list of places in the world we'd like to see one day. Even if we've traveled a lot, there are places where our feet have never touched the ground and our eyes have never physically seen. We can't understand fully what it would be like to live there. In an even greater way, we can't understand fully what God's kingdom is like.

The Bible tells us that we can't comprehend the thoughts of God through our natural understanding but through spiritual understanding (1 Cor. 2:13-15). Just like those places we've never visited, we have only lived in this natural world; we don't have the ability to even envision fully what God's kingdom or heaven is like. The truth is that it will be better than anything we can imagine.

When Jesus revealed glimpses about God's kingdom to His followers, He taught in parables (v. 10)—stories used to illustrate an idea. Jesus's parables revealed how God's kingdom works and taught spiritual truths. Jesus used objects and situations the people already understood and had seen in the natural world to explain spiritual realities; He wanted to help them (and us) begin to understand the way of the kingdom (v. 11). As we seek to know God and understand His kingdom, Jesus's parables are greatly valuable. With the help of the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom and understanding, we can understand the ways of God's kingdom. Even today, God continues to use what we can see and understand in the natural world to teach us about His kingdom and to reveal more of Himself, if we will have eyes to see and ears to hear (Matt. 13:9).

- **CAN YOU THINK OF A STORY OR AN ILLUSTRATION THAT HELPED YOU UNDERSTAND GOD MORE? HOW DID IT HELP YOU?**
- **HOW CAN WE KNOW THAT GOD DESIRES FOR US TO UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL TRUTH?**

PRAY

THANK YOU, JESUS, FOR USING STORIES AND ILLUSTRATIONS TO SHOW ME WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOUR KINGDOM IS LIKE. HELP ME TO SEE AND HEAR ALL YOU WANT TO TEACH ME THROUGH WHAT IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.



DAY TWO

MATTHEW 13:47-50

When you are writing, speaking, or presenting something, knowing your audience is critical. How you say something would be very different for a well-educated adult than for a five-year-old child. What is relevant and what makes sense to them is different, so how you communicate must be different. Jesus understood this and intentionally tailored both what He said and how He said it to His audience.

In this parable, Jesus used a fishing illustration. Why? Because many of the people listening were fishermen or were very familiar with fishing. Jesus compared what will happen at the end of the age to hauling in a large catch of fish. In the same way that fishermen separate the good fish from the bad, those who place their faith in Jesus will be separated from those who reject Him. Those who placed their faith in Jesus will be saved from eternal judgment, while those who reject Him will face eternal judgment (v. 50).

This parable not only teaches us about what will happen at the end of the age and urges us to place our faith in Jesus, but it also reminds us that God speaks to us in ways we can understand. Just as Jesus used a fishing illustration for fishermen, God speaks to us in ways that make sense to us. The Holy Spirit reveals truths of God's Word to us in ways we can comprehend and apply. And this is great news! We don't have to be intimidated when reading the Bible, praying, or seeking to know God more. He loves us; He wants us to know Him; and He teaches us in ways that are personal and intentional.

- **WHAT DOES JESUS USING PARABLES SHOW US ABOUT HIS LOVE FOR US AND HIS DESIRE FOR US TO KNOW HIM?**
- **WHEN HAS GOD SPOKEN TRUTH TO YOU IN A WAY YOU COULD UNDERSTAND? HOW DID THE HOLY SPIRIT HELP YOU?**

PRAY

**JESUS, THANK YOU FOR SPEAKING TO ME
AND REVEALING TRUTH IN A WAY THAT I CAN
UNDERSTAND. I OPEN MY HEART TO HEAR YOUR
VOICE AND TO GROW IN MY UNDERSTANDING OF
YOUR KINGDOM.**



DAY THREE

MATTHEW 5:13-16

Have you ever found yourself singing lyrics to a song you didn't realize you knew? Music can play around you and amazingly make its way into your heart and mind without you noticing. Then suddenly, that song comes on, and you sing every word. What once was unnoticed had been getting into you all along.

Whether we like to admit it or not, small things really can make a big difference. We see this truth throughout the Bible. Jesus taught this concept through the parable of the mustard seed. Although the mustard seed is tiny when it is planted, it grows into a large tree (Matt. 13:31-32). While this principle applies to several areas of our lives, it is especially important when thinking about impacting our world for Christ. We often feel like we aren't making much of a difference when we're trying to be a good influence or share the gospel with others, especially when we don't see immediate results. We can feel like we're trying so hard but not accomplishing anything. Jesus explained that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As salt, we bring flavor and preservation, and as light, we shine in the darkness so others can see the hope of Christ. When we can't see the impact, we can't become discouraged and lose our flavor or our light. Instead, we remember that, like a mustard seed, what seems small today is something God can cause to grow tomorrow. Just like the songs we didn't know we knew, God can use us to plant seeds in people's hearts and lives that, over time, grow for His glory without us ever seeing it happen.

- **DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO NEEDS TO HEAR THE GOSPEL? WHAT ARE PRACTICAL WAYS YOU CAN BE SALT AND LIGHT TO THIS PERSON?**
- **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN DISCOURAGED WHEN TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR CHRIST? HOW CAN REMEMBERING THE MUSTARD SEED HELP YOU OVERCOME THIS?**

PRAY

**GOD, I PRAY FOR BOLDNESS TO BE SALT AND LIGHT
IN THE WORLD. HELP ME PLANT SMALL SEEDS IN
FAITH, KNOWING THAT YOU CAN CAUSE THEM TO
GROW AND MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE.**



DAY FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-9

Have you ever heard the expression, “You can’t have your cake and eat it too”? The phrase basically means that in life, you must often make a choice. You can’t both keep your cake and eat it, for if you eat your cake, you no longer have it, and if you keep your cake, you cannot eat it. You must choose one or the other. Confusing, right?

This phrase applies to following Jesus too. How? You can’t both follow Jesus and, at the same time, embrace all this world has to offer and chase the desires of your own heart. No, following Jesus means bowing our knees to Him as the Lord of our lives and dying to ourselves. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote that he was willing to lose what was once so valuable to him for the sake of knowing Jesus.

This can be difficult, though, because we live in the here and now while many of God’s promises are eternal. Turning away from what the world has to offer and denying ourselves the worldly pleasures and comforts that are right in front of us aren’t easy; it feels like they matter so much. But we must remember that everything the world offers is temporary—here today and gone tomorrow. What Jesus offers, however, can’t be taken away and lasts forever. Jesus taught against storing up treasures on earth and investing in what is eternal instead (Matt. 6:19-20). Like the apostle Paul, we can choose to embrace what Jesus offers us, what will last and can’t be taken or destroyed. What this world offers is rubbish compared to the excellence of knowing Jesus, experiencing His love, and receiving the promise of life, both now and forever with Him.

- **WHEN OR WHERE DO YOU FIND IT MOST DIFFICULT TO TURN AWAY FROM WHAT THIS WORLD OFFERS TO FULLY FOLLOW JESUS?**
- **HOW CAN YOU REMIND YOURSELF THAT WHAT THE WORLD OFFERS IS ONLY TEMPORARY?**

PRAY

GOD, HELP ME TO SEE THE GIFT OF SALVATION AND THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE AS MOST VALUABLE. HELP ME SEE THAT EVERYTHING ELSE PALES IN COMPARISON TO KNOWING YOU.



DAY FIVE

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

Do you know what we don't like to talk about? Personal responsibility. Counting on someone else to do something for you or blaming someone else for something we did is so much easier! But personal responsibility? Uncomfortable. It forces us to take accountability, to do things the right way.

But personal responsibility is important. Throughout Scripture, God gives us instructions and commands that, if we follow, lead to the life God wants for us. An example of this is found in today's passage: The apostle Paul tells us to set our minds on things above. This is an intentional action step—just like if you decided to set a plate on your table. You would have to grab the plate, walk to the table, and then set it down. In a similar way, we must intentionally set our minds on the things of God.

Did you know that your mind goes where you lead it? Through the content we look at, listen to, and the daily habits we form, we set our minds somewhere—on something—every day. The question is: Where are we setting them? When we choose to read the Bible, to pray, to be involved in church, to hang out with godly people, and only to consume what glorifies God, we are setting our minds on things above. God, His ways, His kingdom, and the eternal promises He has given to us become the focus of our thoughts. So, let's take personal responsibility for what consumes our minds. Since we have been given new life in Christ, let's set our minds on the Lord and on His kingdom.

- **WHERE ARE YOU CURRENTLY SETTING YOUR MIND? WHAT DO YOU ALLOW TO CONSUME YOUR THOUGHTS?**
- **WHAT CHOICES AND HABITS CAN YOU CHANGE TO SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE, ALLOWING THE THINGS OF GOD TO CONSUME YOUR THOUGHTS?**

PRAY

**GOD, I REPENT FOR THE WAYS I'VE SET MY MIND
ON THINGS THAT DON'T HONOR OR GLORIFY YOU.
GIVE ME THE STRENGTH AND WISDOM TO PLACE MY
THOUGHTS ON YOU EACH DAY.**