

FRONTLINE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

SESSION 3: GOSPEL & KINGDOM

OUTLINE OF SESSION 3

TEACHING: 30 MINS

The Kingdom of God

The Gospel and the Kingdom

 Gospel Faith and Kingdom Works

 Gospel Hospitality and Kingdom Generosity

 Gospel Proclamation and Kingdom Demonstration

Sacraments

EXERCISE: 15 MINS

Gospel Hospitality

TEACHING NOTES (30 MIN)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Discussion Question: Can you think of any one-time events that have happened within your lifetime that had a massive impact on shaping culture or the world? How did this momentary event transform the world so quickly?

Even though Jesus spent only three years in the public limelight, the world was transformed through his ministry. While we can point to historical events in our lifetimes that define a generation, the world has been defined by the person of Jesus for the past 2000 years. How did this happen? What did Jesus teach that compelled people to leave everything behind to follow him? Jesus proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14–15)

Write this down. **The kingdom of God is wherever God is recognized and received as king.** But because of sin, creation has been bent from God’s good design. Psalm 2 tells us that “the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain; the kings of the earth set themselves... against the LORD and his Anointed” (Ps 2:1-2). Humanity’s goal in our sin is to “tear off [God’s] bonds” and deny his good order. What does it look like when we cast off the bonds of God’s kingship? God’s authority and will are rejected, filling creation with chaos and futility. That is where God intervened. Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God on earth. He came to bring all things in submission to God through his own rule and reign.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus constantly taught about the kingdom of God—what it is like and how to enter into it. He taught about how God’s kingship would transform our lives and our communities. In fact, the book of Acts tells us that he spent his final days on earth talking about the kingdom of God.

But the kingdom of God is not what we expected. Jesus was born into poverty and obscurity. He taught that the kingdom belonged to the meek, the lowly, and the poor. In God’s kingdom, the first would be the last; the greatest would be the servant of all. Jesus had no army, but would rather bless his enemies than slaughter them. If Jesus was bringing a kingdom, it sure didn’t look like it.

THE GOSPEL AND THE KINGDOM

The kingdom of God would not come through might or power or violence. **Instead, the kingdom was breaking into the world through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.**

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In his life, Jesus took on a body and became fully man while remaining fully God. He lived on earth as a man without sin. Wherever Jesus went, the enemy lost his grip on creation. Jesus healed the sick, forgave sins, cast out demons, and raised the dead. Each miracle of Jesus was a bold statement: “the kingdom of God has arrived—darkness beware.” The good news that we call the gospel is that God had come in Jesus to defeat his enemies, rescue his people, and create a new kingdom where his rule and reign would always be recognized.

In his death, Jesus took the penalty for our sins. On the cross, he suffered as our substitute, reconciling us back to God. However, Jesus wasn’t the victim but the victor. By his death, he overthrew all other authorities and established his rule on the earth. He was raised up as king on the cross. This is why the Gospel writers highlight the royal images of the crucifixion. Jesus was given a splendid purple robe. He held a reed as his royal scepter. A crown of thorns was placed on his head. The Gospels nail the irony: he was crowned as king of all through humiliation and mockery.

In his resurrection, Jesus literally rose from the dead and is alive today. New creation life is now invading the world. Through his rising, Jesus declared to the world that death had been defeated. He ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God’s throne. From heaven, he rules and reigns as king, continuing to establish God’s kingdom, until that day when it covers the whole earth. We long for the day when King Jesus physically returns to the earth to restore all things in a new heavens and new earth.

Here is the point: the message of the gospel and the message of the kingdom go hand-in-hand. The gospel story is the kingdom story. The unity of the gospel and kingdom is not just an idea to believe. The gospel story of the kingdom of God means everything for our life. Let’s look at three ways that the gospel and the kingdom go hand-in-hand. You can write these down in the blanks as we go.

1. GOSPEL FAITH & KINGDOM WORKS

Gospel Faith. We believe that the good news of Jesus impacts every area of our lives. It addresses our sins, wounds, and weaknesses. It meets us in our guilt, shame, and loneliness. The gospel is not just the message by which we come to faith in Jesus. It is the very essence of the Christian life. We live by faith in Jesus. Faith is recognizing the truth of who Jesus is and trusting completely in him.

But how do we come to place our faith in Jesus and others do not? Is it because we are smarter than others, or more righteous than others, or less broken than others? No, we come to faith in Jesus because of his grace in election. Before we had done anything good or bad, before we existed, before creation itself, God unconditionally loved us and chose us to be his sons and daughters.

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There is nothing we can do to earn God's grace. Rather, the gospel drives us to look away from ourselves and place all of our hope in Jesus and his work alone. We want to spend our whole lives learning to more fully lean into the grace of Jesus by faith.

Kingdom Works. At the same time, if Jesus is truly our king, he has the authority to tell us how to live. We can't say that we trust in Jesus as king, yet continue to live as our own king. To be a follower of Jesus, you have to actually follow Jesus. This doesn't mean perfection. Nor does this mean that we somehow earn God's favor by being good. But, faith always leads to works.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?... For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (Jas 2:14, 26)

Under the authority of Jesus, we have been called into a new way of living. The kingdom impacts our lifestyle, speech, marriages, singleness, sexuality, parenting, and relationships. Our counter-cultural ethic is a witness to the power and goodness of the kingdom of God.

2. GOSPEL HOSPITALITY & KINGDOM GENEROSITY

Gospel Hospitality. We believe that, because of the gospel, we have been welcomed into God's family, into God's house. Jesus loved us when we least deserved it. He died and rose again to bring us near. By the Spirit he adopts us as sons and daughters. He calls us to display that same love and hospitality toward one another (Eph 2:13-19).

We prioritize gospel hospitality in our Sunday gatherings and in our community groups. We look for the visitor, the newcomer, and the outsider to greet, engage, and introduce them to community. This kind of hospitality has the opportunity to change lives.

Every time we gather there may be people among us who have never experienced the love of God. Because of the welcome that we have received in the gospel, our welcome to others may be the first taste of the gospel they truly get.

Kingdom Generosity. God gave first and best in offering us life through his Son. King Jesus was so generous that he "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant" for our sake. (Phil 2:7) Even more, God actually gave us the righteousness of Christ in exchange for our sin. Jesus took on everything we deserve, and we get everything Jesus deserves. We want all of our lives, even our finances, to be a generous response back to God's generosity—to see his Kingdom come and flourish among us.

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor 9:7)

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We approach giving in three primary ways: tithes, alms, and offerings. Tithes, meaning a tenth in Hebrew, are regular financial gifts which support the everyday, ongoing needs of the church. Alms are intentional gifts that go above and beyond tithes which bring relief to the poor and most vulnerable in society. Offerings are occasional gifts to meet specific needs, where the church rallies around a specific gospel cause locally or globally. You will have a chance to engage each of these types of giving in the life of our church.

We ask each member of Frontline to commit to regular financial giving to further the mission God has given us in our city and the world. In the end, our desire is for every believer to experience the joy and blessing that comes with giving.

3. GOSPEL PROCLAMATION & KINGDOM DEMONSTRATION

Gospel Proclamation. Gospel proclamation pushes back darkness by pointing people to the only good news that can save them. We are called to build relationships with those far from God and look for opportunities to tell them about the one who has rescued us. Pushing back darkness means opening our mouths to talk about what God has done for us in Jesus.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pet 2:9)

Kingdom Demonstration. Through kingdom demonstration, we put our hands to the plough, not wearying of doing good as Jesus brings the kingdom of God. The church is not a “lifeboat” for Christians to get off the sinking ship of the world. The church is a place where the kingdom is present in the world. We care about the spiritual and physical needs of those in darkness around us. We seek to serve our city with the light of Christ. We move toward our neighbors who are poor or are considered outsiders. The light of the gospel works in both word and action. We are called to take action to bring God’s good order, life, and goodness to a chaotic world. In this way, the gospel community adorns the gospel word.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Pet 2:12)

SACRAMENTS

One of the places where we see the union between gospel and kingdom is in the sacraments. The sacraments are sacred acts of worship that Jesus commanded for all Christians. In baptism and communion, the physical and spiritual come together to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Sacraments serve three purposes. Write these down:

Sacraments are Signs of Grace. Sacraments are visible signs of invisible grace. They are highly symbolic rituals that represent the benefits we have experienced through the gospel. In the rituals of the sacraments, we physically reenact the climactic moments of the gospel. We tangibly and physically experience invisible spiritual realities.

Sacraments are Means of Grace. When we engage the sacraments through faith, God has promised to help us, sustain us, assure us, and work in us through them. In the sacraments, we come expecting God to meet us with his grace.

Sacraments are Markers of Grace. Sacraments mark us out as citizens of the kingdom of God. We receive a new identity through faith in the gospel of Jesus. Through baptism and communion, God sets us apart and declares us his own. The sacraments reorient how we see ourselves, others, and the world.

BAPTISM

Baptism is the initial step of the Christian life, the first act of faith and repentance. It is the primary way a person identifies themselves as a follower of Jesus in the world. In the Bible, whenever a person comes to faith in Jesus, they are immediately baptized in water. It serves as a physical sign of their intention to embrace the good news of Jesus. In baptism, a professing believer makes a public commitment to follow Jesus and is fully immersed in water. The act of immersion embodies our new spiritual reality: we have died to our old way of life, and have been raised to a new life in Jesus (Rom 6:3–4).

When we are baptized, God speaks over us that we are his children. It is the way God visibly displays what he has done inside us. Throughout our lives, our baptism is a constant reminder of the promises that God has made toward us.

COMMUNION

To strengthen our faith and nourish our souls, Jesus gave us the sacrament of communion, also called the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. Unlike baptism, communion is to be regularly practiced again and again throughout the Christian life. We celebrate communion each Sunday at Frontline. For those who have taken the initial step of faith and repentance in baptism, the Lord's Supper is a means to remember and receive the love and grace of Jesus anew (1 Cor 11:23–26).

The bread is a tangible symbol of the broken body of Jesus for us. The wine is a tangible symbol of the shed blood of Jesus. Each week, as followers of Jesus eat the bread and drink the wine, we actually commune with Jesus and feast on his presence. But further, as we practice this habit together, we also have fellowship and union with one another (1 Cor 10:16–17).

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Communion is a faith meal for baptized followers of Jesus. If someone has come to faith in Jesus but hasn't been baptized since, we would call them to submit to the initiatory sign of baptism first. Whereas baptism symbolizes our entrance into the Christian faith, communion symbolizes our ongoing need for Jesus. Jesus is both the author and the perfecter of our faith. The sacraments are one of the ways that Jesus continues to meet us, sustain us, and keep us until he returns to finally perfect the work he began in us.

EXERCISE: GOSPEL HOSPITALITY (15 MIN)

Gospel hospitality is one of the most practical ways in which we embody the gospel and serve as a sign and foretaste of the coming kingdom (1 Pet 4:7–9). In both Sunday gatherings and community groups, we are called to move toward people, greet them warmly, and have thoughtful conversations. But who do we prioritize?

Ed Welch suggests that we should prioritize greeting in our gatherings in the following order:

1. **The visitor (what Scripture calls the “foreigner” or “alien”) comes first.**
2. **The visitor who returns comes next.**
3. **The less popular, the introverts, the marginalized, or those sitting alone come next.**
4. **Then come the children.**
5. **Good friends are interspersed through these greetings, but they are left for later if time is short.**

1. LEARNING TO PRIORITIZE

Work through the following questions with your table.

1. What are some reasons why the order listed above might be best when moving toward others and greeting them on Sundays and in community groups?
2. Why might you personally be reluctant to move toward visitors?
3. Who in your life is one step ahead of you in knowing people? What does that person do that you could learn from?

2. LEARNING TO ENGAGE

Work through the following exercise with your table. Don’t look at the chart until you’re done brainstorming (See Worksheet)!

- Brainstorm together some examples of a helpful greeting and initial questions you could ask a complete stranger when greeting them on a Sunday or in a group.
- Afterwards, compare your answers with the suggestions on the chart (See worksheet).

3. PRAYER

Close your time by praying aloud together that God would encourage and equip each of you to pursue gospel hospitality.