

*Kingdom*  
**CULTURE**



# *Kingdom* **CULTURE**

*Enjoy, Express, and Establish  
Heaven on Earth!*

DANIEL H. PARK

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ISBN (978-0-9833541-1-6)

Printed in USA

Blessed International of South Bay  
2310 205th St. Torrance, California 90501

## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to our new family- Blessed International of South Bay. Let's live Kingdom culture together and give our region a cultural experience of heaven!



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## INTRODUCTION

### *It's Been A Culture Problem*

**T**hroughout the last two thousand years, there have been many outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Many great revivals are recorded in our history books, and I can go on and on, listing the incredible moves of the Spirit of God. We can talk about the salvations, miracles, and manifestations of God's presence- but sadly, most of those revivals ended, even abruptly.

As I pondered upon the reasons why so many revivals burned up and burned out, the Holy Spirit began revealing to me that there was nothing wrong with the *wine* that He had poured out; the problem was always the *wineskin*. Some have investigated certain revivals and concluded that they were not of God because of how they ended. Could it be that although it was a real move of God, the people just couldn't contain and maintain it because of the weakness of their wineskin?

Jesus said, "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed" (Luke 5:37).

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Old wineskins cannot keep up with the expanding nature of the new wine, so if you put new wine in old wineskins, you will lose both. The new wine is a picture of revival and the Kingdom of God. God's will for both revival and the Kingdom has always been ever-increasing expansion. He desires that we progressively enjoy, express, and establish His Kingdom, which results in a spiritual revival that transforms regions. Yet, for us to successfully steward this expansion of God's Kingdom, we are going to need new wineskins. Wineskins are a picture of mindsets and culture. The wrong mindsets and culture will kill a revival. Our old mindsets and culture will prevent us from continually enjoying, expressing, and establishing the Kingdom of God. **We need to embrace Kingdom culture, which is the only mindset that can sustain an ever-increasing revival.**

It's always been a culture problem, but not for long...

### *A Greater Anointing*

It's the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon our lives that enables us to accomplish incredible exploits for the Kingdom of God. We all desire a greater anointing, which is the evident power of God. We want to see God's power intensified in our personal lives and our churches. Yet, unless we are able to successfully steward that greater anointing, it's almost pointless to pursue it. It's like trying to fill up a cup with holes punched in the bottom. Just like you need the right wineskin or culture to handle an ever-increasing revival, we also need the right culture to host an ever-increasing anointing.

The writer of Hebrews stated about Jesus, "Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. *You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore*

## *Introduction: It's Been A Culture Problem*

*God, your God, has anointed you* with the oil of gladness beyond your companions” (Hebrews 1:9 NIV).

Righteousness is the trademark of the Kingdom. Righteousness is the culture of the Kingdom. Righteousness is not supposed to just be something we practice once in a while; it's to be our *culture*. It's to be our way of life. Righteousness is to be how we think consciously and subconsciously. When we love righteousness and hate whatever is inconsistent with Kingdom culture, we will be in position to experience an ever-increasing anointing, which will fill you with supernatural joy and cause you to outshine those steeped in the culture of this world.

## *We Need The Right Environment*

Plants need the right environment in order to flourish. The wrong environment will either stunt the plant's growth or prematurely kill it. **The only environment that can nurture the ever-increasing presence, power, and move of the Holy Spirit is Kingdom culture.** Therefore, instead of just crying out for another outpouring of the Spirit and a fresh anointing, we need to work on our wineskin. It's always been a culture problem. There is nothing wrong with His wine, just our wineskin. Therefore, it's time for us to be re-cultured. It's time for Kingdom culture!

Daniel H. Park  
2013





# **PART 1**

*Kingdom Culture Defined*



# 1

## *The Secret Key*

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,  
and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:33).

**J**esus gave us the secret key to have everything we need in life. It's simple, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness..." If seeking God's Kingdom and righteousness is so vital and foundational to enjoying the life that God wants us to live, then shouldn't we understand what God's Kingdom and righteousness really is?

I have a master key to my office, but if I don't know how to identify that key, I won't be able to get into my office. We must identify this key that Jesus has given us and then become well acquainted with it. If we are ignorant of God's Kingdom and righteousness, how can we seek after it? We can't pursue something we have no clue about. Let's talk about God's Kingdom and righteousness.

**The *Kingdom* of God refers to His country, and *righteousness* means His culture – we must seek the culture of His country (Kingdom culture) *first*.**

## KINGDOM CULTURE

Understanding Kingdom culture is foundational for every believer. It's not a teaching reserved for the spiritually advanced; it's a revelation that we must understand *first* and foremost. Kingdom culture is God's utmost priority for our lives.

### *What is the Kingdom of God?*

The Kingdom of God is more than a place called *heaven*; it speaks to us of the very country of God. God is a great King and every king has a kingdom (Malachi 1:14). So, where is the Kingdom of God located?

The Kingdom of God is in heaven and *also* here on earth!

Jesus came announcing, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near" (Mark 1:5 HCSB). Jesus was declaring that with His arrival on Planet Earth, the Kingdom of God had come! This is exactly what Isaiah had long before prophesied about Jesus' coming:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and *the government shall be upon his shoulder*, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

**Even though you might think *heaven* when you hear the term "Kingdom of God," the intent was never for God's Kingdom to be confined to heaven.**

God purposed that His Kingdom would rule in the hearts of men and women, spreading its culture throughout the entire world, so that earth would look just like heaven. Ever since God created humanity, it was His desire that we enjoy, express, and establish His Kingdom's culture. God



## *The Secret Key*

says to us, “Inherit the kingdom *prepared for you from the creation of the world*” (Matthew 25:34 GWT). God’s original plan was for His children to enjoy His Kingdom. This is what brings Him deep pleasure!

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:33).

### *Designed to be Diplomats*

God made humanity in His own image, so we would be His Kingdom representatives on the earth. No animal could represent His Kingdom like we can. We were designed to be *diplomats* of God’s Kingdom – we were destined for *diplomacy*.

**Diplomat:** An official representing their home country abroad.

**Diplomacy:** The profession, activity, or skill of international relations apart from physical violence, typically by a country’s representatives abroad, as they push the agenda of their country in a foreign land.

**Ambassador:** An authorized diplomat who is officially appointed to conduct foreign diplomacy.

God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden- a foreign land, to represent the Kingdom of God, to push its agenda, and spread its culture abroad. They were Kingdom ambassadors called to Kingdom diplomacy.

This explains why God wanted Adam and Eve to take charge over the earth. Heaven was already flooded with Kingdom culture, but earth still

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needed to be. God commanded and commissioned them to become the world's most influential leaders, so they could express and establish His Kingdom's culture everywhere!

Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for the fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth (Genesis 1:28 MSG).

Let's not forget that Adam and Eve were made in the exact representation (or image) of God (Genesis 1:27). They were godly leaders- who were to spread their wings of influence, which would result in the glory of God covering the earth as the waters cover the seas. This was God's original game plan, and His will has not changed. His call for humanity is irrevocable (Romans 11:29). **God still desires that His people would become dynamic leaders on this planet in order to establish His culture and push His agenda!** He desires for heaven to be expressed and established on earth through you and I.

Let me re-emphasize this important point: The Kingdom of God was never supposed to be confined to heaven! God is not selfish. He longs to share the good things He has and His Kingdom is *good beyond comprehension*, so He wants to share it with everyone! Therefore, Jesus taught us to pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..." (Matthew 6:10). Jesus taught us to pray according to the will of God, which has always been for His Kingdom's culture to cover the earth. This must also become our fervent desire, passionate prayer, and primary pursuit!

### *What is God's Righteousness?*

Righteousness has a two-fold meaning: **right standing** and **right living**. When we see the word *righteousness* in the Bible, it sometimes

## *The Secret Key*

refers to *right standing with God*, other times it refers to *right living before God*, and sometimes it implies both definitions. God desires for us to be in *right standing* with His government and also to *live uprightly*, according to the written laws and cultural norms of His country.

My grandmother is *positionally* an American. She has her passport and U.S. citizenship. Yet, she is not *practically* an American- she speaks very little English and doesn't have much American culture in her. **Righteousness in its fullest expression is *positional* and *practical*.** We become *positionally* righteous when we become a Kingdom citizen, and we are *practically* righteous as we live out Kingdom culture. It's important that we embrace both the *positional* and *practical* implications of righteousness. They are two-sides to the same coin, and any coin without a heads or tails is a counterfeit.

- Counterfeit righteousness claims citizenship in God's Kingdom, but rebels against its laws and culture.
- Counterfeit righteousness pursues Kingdom culture without even being a legal citizen yet.

We must first become a citizen of heaven and then pursue conformity to the culture of heaven. That's true righteousness.

When you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you become a citizen of God's Kingdom – you now have a legal relationship with the government. Citizens are born into God's Kingdom, which is why Jesus said, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). Citizenship is where life in the Kingdom really starts. As soon as you become a citizen, it's now time to learn the laws and culture of our new country. If you have already been born-again, you no longer need to pursue your citizenship, but you need to pursue Kingdom culture!

### Do You Have the Secret Key?

Examine yourself with the three questions below – are you seeking “first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness”?

- Do you prioritize God’s Kingdom invading this earth and spreading its cultural influence?
- Do you esteem your citizenship and wish to learn more about your rights as a citizen of God’s Kingdom?
- Are you committed to following the standards of the Kingdom and practicing its culture?

Answering “Yes” is the first step to unlocking the full benefits of the Kingdom in your life. This is the secret key to a totally blessed life.

### Discussion Questions:

- Is there any area in your life that needs God’s provision? According to Matthew 6:33, what is the key to unlocking provision from heaven?
- God’s primary desire was for us to enjoy His Kingdom and it was His original game plan for humanity to spread His culture. Explain how we know this.
- Why is it important to understand that righteousness has a two-fold meaning?

# 2

## *Why Jesus Came*

**W**hat was the exact vision and mission of Jesus Christ? What did He seek to accomplish while He walked the earth? What was the purpose of His coming? **Jesus did not come to bring another world religion; He came to bring the Kingdom of God to us.** As Moses was sent to free the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, Jesus came to deliver us from Satan's dominion, which humanity came under through Adam and Eve's submission to Satan in the Garden of Eden (See Genesis 3).

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

Recently, while we were demolishing walls in order to expand our church's sanctuary, the electric wires got cut and we lost all power along the back wall. Thankfully, an electrician was able to reconnect the wires and reactivate our power. When our first parents fell into sin, it demolished God's original setup. Jesus came to reconnect us to God's Kingdom and to reactivate our ambassadorship.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).

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Jesus came so that we can enjoy God's Kingdom and righteousness – the very things mankind lost in the garden. Jesus came so that our pursuit of the Kingdom and righteousness would not be in vain, but that we would be able to fully enjoy the Kingdom and its culture. He came so that we can be re-commissioned into our original purpose: to be ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, who spread Kingdom culture everywhere! He came so that we can enjoy and establish His culture.

Everywhere He went, Jesus proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23, 9:35, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 16:16). As He taught, He often explained how the Kingdom of God operated. It was His mission to reveal the privileges of citizenship in God's Kingdom. Wherever Jesus went, He took dominion and made earth look more like heaven, demonstrating mankind's original purpose.

Yet, Jesus didn't want to be the *exception*, but the *example*. He even sent out His disciples to preach the Kingdom's arrival and to do the works that He did. If you put your faith in Jesus, He made us into joint-heirs with Him (Romans 8:17), so we can walk in the power He modeled. If you are born-again, "As he (Jesus) is so also are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). Hence, Jesus was able to promise us that we would be able to do even "greater works" than He did (John 14:12). He made the way for everyone to be able to experience the beauty of the Kingdom of God's most perfect culture through us.

### *The Gospel of the Kingdom*

The Kingdom of God was not a side dish that Jesus served, it was His main entrée. What was the gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus preached?

1. Heaven is now invading earth (Mark 9:1, Matthew 12:28, Luke 17:21).

## *Why Jesus Came*

2. You can enjoy citizenship in God's country (John 3:7, Luke 16:16).
3. You can enjoy the rights of being a citizen and heaven will back you up (Matthew 18:18, Mark 11:24).
4. You no longer need to live under Satan's domain and dominion (John 10:10, Luke 10:19, Luke 11:20).
5. You can enjoy, express, and establish the culture of heaven (Matthew 5:13-16, 10:13, 28:19).

Often, Jesus preached about the Kingdom while casting out demons and healing the sick. Jesus demonstrated the message He preached. He did more than *teach* people how to get to heaven; He gave them a *taste* of heaven. He didn't just explain the culture of the Kingdom; He gave the people a *cultural experience*.

Many followed Jesus hoping that He would become the King of Israel and lead the nation of Israel to prominence again- as in the days of King David and King Solomon. Yet, Jesus came saying, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). His immediate goal was to establish the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men and women. He came to spread heaven's culture by raising up faithful and influential ambassadors. Even before His ascension, people were still asking Him,

"'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'" (Acts 1:6-8 NIV).

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Jesus refocused their attention to the enjoying, expressing, and establishing the Kingdom of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, for that is why He came.

### *Restored Citizenship and Ambassadorship*

No ambassador can continue in his position after he has committed high treason against his government. This is why Adam lost his privileges as a Kingdom ambassador. Adam also lost His citizenship, and since we came from his line, we lost our citizenship as well. Thus, we couldn't function as a Kingdom ambassador, until Jesus came. Jesus came to restore our citizenship and ambassadorship.

Jesus came as the "last Adam" in order to fix the mess Adam got us into (1 Corinthians 15:45). Although Jesus was tested, tried, and tempted, He lived in perfect obedience and absolute submission to God's government (John 5:19).

Now, we have the option to come under the fountainhead of Jesus, rather than staying under the fountainhead of Adam. We can have our original purpose reactivated in our lives!

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:23).

Where I live in Southern California, we are known for stressful traffic on our freeways. During rush hour, our freeways become parking lots. Some of the freeways added a special lane- allowing you to bypass the traffic if you have a special pass. Jesus came to give us a special pass, so we don't have to be stuck in Adam's lane. He opened up a new lane- so we can freely move into our God-given destiny- which is Kingdom living.



## *Why Jesus Came*

Jesus was obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. He paid for our sins on the cross. He opened the way for us to be liberated to live our original calling. Why stay in Adam's lane, when you can move into Jesus' lane?

God used Moses to part the Red Sea and make a way of escape for the Israelites from their Egyptian oppressors. As the oppressors came chasing after them with their weapons, the sea closed in on them, crushing them with a final blow. As the Egyptian army was defeated, the Israelites were liberated to return to their *original* land. Likewise, God used Jesus to make the way of escape for us. As He hung on the cross, under His nail-pierced feet gathered a pool of crimson blood. It was that mini-red sea that enabled us to be liberated, so we can return to our original purpose: Kingdom citizenship and ambassadorship. We can now enjoy Kingdom culture anywhere and spread Kingdom culture everywhere!

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the *blood of Jesus*, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20).

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (Colossians 2:15).

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### Discussion Questions:

- Why is it important to understand that Jesus did not come to start another religion, but to restore us to Kingdom ambassadorship?
- How will we limit ourselves when we see Jesus as the *exception* rather than our *example*?
- Do you think the gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus preached is the same gospel the modern church is preaching?

# 3

## *Re-Cultured*

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son... (Colossians 1:13).

**Y**ou once belonged to the kingdom of darkness, where Satan has uncontested rule, but when you said “Yes” to Jesus Christ, He delivered you from the tyranny of Satan, and now you belong to the Kingdom of God. In the kingdom of darkness, we were blind, deceived, and lost, but now we are in a new kingdom where perfect love reigns. **However, the tragic irony is that you can be in a new Kingdom and stubbornly hold on to your old culture.**

Monica grew up in gross poverty in Eastern Europe. When she was about ten years old, her parents decided to sell her to the Mafia for their own financial security. To groom her for prostitution, they beat and raped her continually, locking her up in the chains of fear and ripping away any sense of dignity. She had lived the life of a prostitute for twenty years when a compassionate group from Great Britain came to rescue her. They snatched her away from her pimp and brought her back to Great Britain – she kicked and screamed the whole way.

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Now Monica was in a brand new country where they graciously offered her a new citizenship. They provided her with a nice place to stay, which was in stark contrast to where she had been housed by her owners. She was now free from sex-slavery and had the opportunity to pursue her dreams. But there was a problem... She had no dreams. The culture of prostitution was so ingrained in her by the mafia that she was miserable in her new country. The kind treatment only made her more and more uncomfortable. To everyone's surprise, she ran away and went back to her owners and her life of slavery. Monica was so accustomed to her old culture that she could not appreciate the brand new citizenship and culture that was offered to her.

Monica's story repeats itself in the lives of many born-again Christians. Although they have been delivered from their old life of bondage, they refuse to enjoy the full privileges of the Kingdom of God. Instead, they return to their inferior way of living, just as a dog returns to its own vomit. It's tragic when Christians refuse to be re-cultured (unlearning their old culture to embrace their new culture). They deny themselves the ability to fully enjoy their new life in the Kingdom of God.

### *What is Culture?*

Culture encompasses your beliefs, values, norms, mindsets, diet, and language. Every kingdom has its unique way of life. Your previous kingdom cultured you in the ways of this world where Satan has set up his rule (see 2 Corinthians 4:4; John 14:30). Satan is "the god of this world." The Greek word for world is *cosmos* where we get our modern word *cosmetics*. A number of women use cosmetics, which add an artificial layer to their skin. Satan's kingdom has formed a layer on this earth called the "spirit of this world" (1 Corinthians 2:12). From birth, we are saturated by Satan's cosmetic culture. To clarify, Satan is

not the god of the *earth* – he doesn’t own the earth, because “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24:1). However, Satan has painted this earth with his culture, as a graffiti artist would take over an unguarded building.

## *Satanic Culture*

What does Satan’s culture look like?

For all that is in the *world* [the cosmetic layer]—the desires [lust] of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father [Kingdom culture] but is from the world (1 John 2:16, brackets are mine).

This world’s culture comes directly from the heart of Satan, who wants to make you selfish, lustful, greedy, and proud, molding you into *his* own image. This culture is the opposite of true love and real humility. We get a clear picture of Satan’s culture in Sodom and Gomorrah where the citizens only wanted to satisfy their lustful desires and did not care about people. They pounded on Lot’s door and demanded that he hand over his guests so they could rape them (Genesis 19:5). They saw people as sex objects, not as valuable human beings. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah lived luxuriously, which is why Lot chose to live there. But they were so drunk on their comfortable living, that they did not care about the state of their soul; their pride caused them to believe that they were invincible. A culture that is ruled by lust and possessed by pride is satanic.

We are no strangers to this worldly, satanic culture of lust and pride, but it’s time to completely unlearn that lifestyle! We are to be aliens and strangers to this world’s culture (We will study this deeper in Section 2).

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Peter begged the believers in Jesus Christ,

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul (1 Peter 2:12).

### *Time to Be Re-Cultured*

As followers of Jesus Christ, you are no longer of this world. Jesus declared that His disciples are not of this world (John 17:14). We are citizens of His Kingdom and Jesus made it clear that His Kingdom is not of this world's system (John 18:36). It's time to be re-cultured. Unless you are re-cultured, you cannot enjoy this new Kingdom!

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2).

Jesus came proclaiming the arrival of His Kingdom and demanding the people to be re-cultured. The Greek word for “repent” is *metanoia*, and it implies far more than just crying in sorrow; it speaks of the transformation of our mindsets and lifestyles – being re-cultured. We must exchange our old culture for our new one. Paul reinforced this same message by writing,

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).

We must not adapt to the surrounding culture of this world, but we are to be so re-cultured that we will be able to discern and walk in God's perfect will for our lives. When you are re-cultured, you intentionally

and unintentionally live righteously. Culture is so engrained in us that we portray it subconsciously. **As Kingdom citizens, we must consciously fight for Kingdom culture until Kingdom culture becomes our subconscious way of thinking.**

Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds [Your sub-conscious mind is the spirit of your mind] (Ephesians 4:22-23).

### *Citizens of Heaven*

Though I am a citizen of the United States, my primary citizenship is in heaven. Your citizenship to your country will expire the day you die, but your citizenship in heaven will endure forever.

For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. *But our citizenship is in heaven*, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:18-20).

Whenever we embrace the culture of this world, we become enemies of the cross, for Jesus suffered and died in order to free us from the culture of this world. On the cross He took your sin and gave you His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus' arms stretched out on that wooden cross, providing us with a bridge from Satan's domain into God's Kingdom. Jesus paid a great price for our freedom, and whenever we choose to continue in bondage to the world's culture, we insult the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ.

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Culture determines our habits and mindsets. Those who are cultured by Satan have the habit of satisfying bodily appetites no matter the consequences; Even if it means the destruction of their soul. Their mindsets are upon material things rather than spiritual things. Their minds dream about what will bring them temporary satisfaction rather than what has eternal significance. They are more preoccupied with their temporary bodies than their eternal souls and even dare to glory in their shameful and degrading behavior. Again, this combination of lust and pride is deadly.

*But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20).*

Paul makes it clear that because we are citizens of heaven, Jesus Christ is to be our obsession and focus! Kingdom citizens long to know Jesus more *intimately*; we seek to please Him *continually*; we seek to represent Him *accurately*, and we await His return *steadfastly*. Kingdom citizens must have a radically different culture than those who are citizens of the world.

### *Contrasting Culture*

What God did with the nation of Israel was a foreshadowing of the coming Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> The people of Israel were *culturally different* from those of other nations. God called them to be the light for the nations, so His salvation would reach to the ends of the earth (see Isaiah 49:6). Light is only as bright as its contrast from darkness. Israelite culture was to be so peculiar that it would capture the attention of the

<sup>1</sup> I'm not implying that Israel does not have a purpose or a destiny anymore. This sentence was not constructed to advocate replacement theology, which states- that the church has replaced Israel.



world, arousing the interest of nations, so that they would pursue the God of Israel.

Unfortunately, Israel got in trouble when they backslid and started blending their holy culture with the vile cultural practices of the other nations. When they brought mixture into their culture, it brought destruction to themselves and shame to the God of Israel. **We, too, must be careful not to mix the cultures of the world and the Kingdom.**

God chose Moses to be the cultural architect for the nation of Israel, and God sent Jesus to be the cultural architect for the Kingdom of God. As followers of Jesus, we also become a “holy nation” and a “peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9 KJV). We are called out of our previous culture to now shine forth the beautiful and irresistible culture of heaven.

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 Peter 2:9).

As Kingdom citizens, we must learn the language of our holy nation; our belief system needs to be re-wired and upgraded; we must embrace new norms and values; we must wear a new mindset, and even our diet needs to change. Only then can we fully enjoy this wonderful, perfect Kingdom. Those who refuse to be re-cultured cannot enjoy the Kingdom experience (see Matthew 21:42).

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### Discussion Questions:

- What happens when we refuse to be re-cultured after we are born again?
- Where does this world's culture come from and how is it different from the culture of the Kingdom?
- Have you met somebody who was so cultured in the Kingdom that their witness was not just peculiar, but irresistible?

# 4

## *Kingdom Talk*

**T**hroughout history, when one nation colonized another, the oppressors would work to force their subjects to lose their language. My Korean grandparents speak Japanese because they went to school during Japan's occupation of Korea. The Japanese sought to take away the Korean culture and language by enforcing the integration of a new language. Korea eventually overthrew the Japanese and re-claimed their peninsula, preserving their language and culture to this day. If Korea had become a long-term colony of Japan, who knows how much of their language and culture they would have been retained.

Have you visited Spanish-speaking countries outside of Spain? In many of these countries, all they speak is Spanish; cities look like Spain and not much is left of their previous culture. When slave traders brought African slaves into Brazil, England, and the United States, those slaves eventually lost their African language and culture.

If you want to lose your culture, lose your language; if you wish to preserve your culture, preserve your language. **If you don't want to be ruled by the culture of this world, lose the language.** If you want the culture of heaven to saturate you, protect the language of the Kingdom by practicing it, and don't let anyone take it away from you.

### *Speak the Language Without A Thick Accent*

It is difficult to fully enjoy a foreign country when you do not understand or speak its language. So to fully enjoy the Kingdom, you must learn its dialect. Without coincidence, when the Holy Spirit arrived on earth and came upon the one-hundred-twenty followers of Jesus who were in the Upper Room, the first thing that changed was their language; they began to speak in new tongues.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:1-4 ).

**The Holy Spirit is your personal Kingdom Culture Coach; He has come to teach you everything about the Kingdom of God and empower you to be a good citizen** (John 16:14; Acts 1:8). When you come to a new country, unless you learn the new language, it will be difficult to function and succeed there. It's not enough to understand the language; you must learn how to speak it, and speak it properly. If you have a thick accent, because your first language is blending with your new language, your words may remain unintelligible and you may send a message that is unintended. I once heard a preacher with a thick Korean accent preaching to a group of young people, "God will give you peace!" But the students thought he was saying that God would help them to urinate, because he pronounced *peace* as *piss*.

**It's important to become fluent in the language of our Kingdom, and there is more to it than just speaking in tongues.** I'm so accustomed

to English that it is the only language I think with; I even dream in English. We are to be so saturated with the culture of the Kingdom that our thoughts, dreams, and subconscious conversations are in the dialect of heaven.

### *King Determines Culture*

In a kingdom, the culture is single-handedly determined by the king. It's not a democracy or a republic. **There is no such thing as pop-culture in the Kingdom of God, only Jesus culture.** Jesus is the very image of God (Hebrews 1:3). When you see Him, you experience the very culture of God (see John 14:9). Everything Jesus did and said was a perfect presentation of Kingdom culture.

Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14, Revelation 19:16). He stated, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). He was placed, "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church" (Ephesians 1:21-22 NIV). Nobody has the credibility and authority to define Kingdom culture like King Jesus.

### *Speak Integrity*

Let what you say be simply "Yes" or "No"; anything more than this comes from evil (Matthew 5:37).

Our King taught us to say what we mean and mean what we say. To Kingdom citizens, insincere flattery and exaggerations are a foreign

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language. Our words ought to carry weight, and we are to follow through on our commitments.

Truth is the language of our culture, not lying. Under our previous kingdom, it was acceptable to speak deceptively, for Satan is the “father of lies” (John 8:44). To speak a lie is to reflect Satan’s culture, but now we have been given the Spirit of truth, who enables us to speak the truth (see John 16:13).

In our Kingdom, we don’t tell dirty jokes. They may have humored us before, but not anymore, for our Kingdom is classy, not raunchy. We don’t say anything that we would not say before the throne of God, for we know that God’s presence is with us everywhere we go.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear (Ephesians 4:29).

### *Speak Encouragement*

Death and life are in the power of the tongue  
(Proverbs 18:21).

Kingdom citizens must become aware of the power invested in our tongues, and we must never be careless with our words. In our previous culture, we allowed our words to bring destruction to people, but now our words are to bring empowerment and restoration. Encouragement is to be your native language, which you speak daily.

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness (Hebrews 3:13).

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Slander is not the language of our kingdom. We don't say untrue and unedifying things about others in order to destroy them. First of all, if your facts aren't straight and your information is twisted, you are lying. Secondly, if you use your tongue to speak curses over people, you pollute yourself as well. Our tongues must not be used as deadly weapons, but life-giving medicine. If you spend your Sundays praising God and weekdays cursing people, you are a very confused citizen.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water (James 3:9-12).

### *Speak Prophetically*

When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you (Matthew 10:19-20).

Kingdom people will speak wisdom beyond their years and education. When we are yielded to the Spirit of God, we will find ourselves prophesying often. When you speak prophetically on a daily basis, those around you will receive timely truths and will be encouraged.

For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged (1 Corinthians 14:31).

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You don't need to always say, "Thus says the Lord" to prophesy. You can speak under the prophetic flow of the Holy Spirit without the recipient even knowing that you are prophesying.

I was speaking with a young teen who shared with me his obsession with guns. He explained how it drove his parents and teachers crazy, and they had labeled him as "deranged." The Lord gave me wisdom on how to help him. I told him, "The reason you are drawn to guns is because you are like a gun. God has given you such power in your words; you have a real speaking gift. Just as a gun has the power to change somebody's life, you have the power to do so as well through your words. Now you need to choose what kind of bullets you will fire with your mouth, but I believe that you will fire the words that will help people and make this world a better place."

He turned quiet, and then sincerely thanked me for sharing that with him. I trust and pray that he will never see guns the same way again.

As I become more cultured in the Kingdom, I find myself prophesying more and more often. I end up saying things I didn't even know I knew. I've told people their names, their occupations, their family situations, their hobbies, their passions, their problems, their hurts, and even their histories- as the Holy Spirit gave me divine enablement. When God uses us like that, it's a sign of His love for those people, and a way to introduce them to our King and our Kingdom.

### *Speak Thanksgiving*

We can either become fluent in thanksgiving or complaining; we can make positive confessions or negative ones. You will become fluent in



the language you practice most. What good does complaining really do? It just increases stress levels and makes us bitter. Speaking negatively just increases our hopelessness and makes us want to give up on life. But what good does thanksgiving do? It lowers our stress levels, protects us from bitterness, stirs hope, and frees us to enjoy life! Thanksgiving will also bring you into and keep you in the presence of God (see Psalm 100:4). The more fluent you become in this language, the deeper you will go in the presence of God. Kingdom citizens are commanded to “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Thanksgiving is not just something we do during our quiet times; it’s to be the language we regularly think and speak in.

Sociologists have labeled this emerging generation as the “Entitled Generation,” who thinks that they deserve everything: big salaries, long vacations, flexible work hours, etc. **The problem with those who think they deserve everything is that they are thankful for nothing and complain about everything.** The culture of our Kingdom is one of gratitude; we are thankful for everything, because all we enjoy in life is a token of God’s grace.

## *Speak Praise*

When the 120 disciples of Jesus started speaking in tongues, they spoke in languages they had never learned. But those listening, who understood their own language spoken, heard about the greatness of God.

Both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God (Acts 2:11).

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The language of heaven declares the greatness of God. This is why when the Apostle John got a sneak peak of heaven, he heard the multitudes praising God (Revelation 4:19). Paul taught the church in Ephesus how to stay filled with the culture of heaven: they were to continually speak and sing of the goodness of God! Paul said,

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart (Ephesians 5:18-19).

As Kingdom people, we praise God for the breakthrough we've been praying for, even before it happens. This is not being psycho, it's being Kingdom-cultured. Kingdom people know how to celebrate before they see the answers to their prayers! Kingdom people declare that they are victorious, even before seeing the victory!

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours (Mark 11:24).

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14).

**Our language changes the atmosphere around us, making earth look more like heaven.** Keep talking Kingdom talk. Our words serve as the steering wheel of our lives (James 3:4). If you want to go back into the world, talk like them. If you want to go further into Kingdom living, speak it!

## **Discussion Questions:**

- How has your conversational talk changed- since you started growing in your relationship with the Holy Spirit?
- Why is it important to understand that Kingdom language is not just speaking in tongues?
- What does it sound like to speak words of faith, in comparison to doubt and unbelief?



# 5

## *Kingdom Norms*

**D**uring a mission trip to India, I noticed that many of the people would slightly shake their heads from side to side as they engaged in conversation. When we asked some of our Indian friends why they did that, they didn't know what we were talking about. They had become so accustomed to doing it that they did it unconsciously. We know a missionary from Germany who spent her last seven years in India, and when she came to the United States to visit us, we noticed that she, too, would bobble her head. She was so immersed in the culture that their norms became her norms.

What are the norms in the Kingdom of God?

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

### *Righteousness*

Righteousness is intended to be a cultural norm, not a religious practice. When I was in high school, a number of my church friends

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made fun of me, calling me the “holy man.” I remember going up for a lay-up in a basketball game and I heard my friend Joe jokingly say, “That lay-up was empowered by the Holy Spirit!” Because of my right living, I became the oddball and a target of teasing. I recall another time, my friends asked me if I partook in the secret sin that they enjoyed. When I told them that I didn’t, they made fun of me and mockingly called me “holy.” But living holy is a cultural norm in the Kingdom of God, and those who don’t embrace right living are the real odd ones.

**If Kingdom people live by the same standards as those in the world, how will we stand out?** The Israelites were called to live by a higher standard because God wanted them to be a light to the rest of the world. He wanted them to stand out, not blend in. He said to them, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47).

God also desires for us to be shining beacons, ablaze with His glory and showing off His culture. This cannot happen apart from right living and abiding by the higher standards of the Kingdom.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

You need to be zealous for right-living! If you aren’t living like you should, pursue righteousness (Kingdom culture)! When you are desperate for Kingdom culture, you will be filled with the culture, and righteousness will become your norm.

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Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they shall be satisfied (Matthew 5:6).

It's time to pursue the culture and to seek the King- as you do, you  
will become drenched with the culture and grow intimate with the King.

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love;  
break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the  
LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon  
you. (Hosea 10:12 NIV)

## *Peace*

For the Kingdom citizen, peace is not a sporadic feeling, but a cultural  
standard. Stress is a foreign emotion in the Kingdom of God. **Don't ever  
justify stress; it's an abnormal experience for the Kingdom Citizen.**  
Worry is not in our culture because we trust our perfect King to take care  
of His citizens as we steward our time, talents, and resources.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is  
alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not  
much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore  
do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What  
shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles  
seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows  
that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God  
and his righteousness, and all these things will be added  
to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for  
tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day  
is its own trouble (Matthew 6:30-34).

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We don't need to stress out about having our needs met, and we don't have to worry about our tomorrow. Our King will meet our needs, and since He's already in our tomorrow, we don't have to be anxious about what is to come. Your tomorrow is in God's hands, which makes your future full of hope and exciting. We must worry about nothing and pray about everything because we trust our King with all things.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7 NASB).

### *Joy*

Although America is one of the world leaders in promoting worldliness, we also have one of the highest rates of depression. Depression is not part of God's Kingdom; it's of the world. To measure how immersed you are in Kingdom Culture, check your joy level.

Rejoice always (1 Thessalonians 5:16 NASB).

When you meet somebody from another country, you get a sense of their culture. Heaven is overflowing with joy, therefore its citizens on earth ought to give the world a taste of heaven's culture.

Contrary to popular opinion, you don't need anything else in order to be joyful. This is how Satan tricked Adam and Eve, by causing them to believe that they needed something *more* in order to be joyful, when they already had indwelling joy. If you aren't living joyfully, you are allowing yourself to be robbed! Some Kingdom citizens make a sub-conscious



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oath to themselves, “I’m not going to be happy, until... I have a big ministry... I have lots of money... I get that promotion... I see that prayer answered... I get married...,” and the list goes on and on. Their lack of joy is not God’s fault, but theirs! They are shooting themselves in the foot, unaware that their spiritual power is being drained – the joy of the Lord is our strength (see Nehemiah 8:10)!

All around the world, people are in pursuit of happiness. Talk about a motivating force! Do you know that what they really seek is the Kingdom? They long for Kingdom joy because they were *made* for Kingdom joy. Although joy is happy, happiness is not joy. Happiness is circumstantial, short-lived, and natural. **The joy of God’s Kingdom transcends circumstances; it is enduring and supernatural.** It is the culture created from the very presence of our King.

In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11 NASB).

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Why is it more advantageous to believe that righteousness, peace, and joy are your culture, not mere religious practices?
- Most people have become accustomed to stress as just a part of life, but why is it important to reject stress as being a natural, inevitable part of your life?
- How is happiness and joy similar and yet different?



# 6

## *Kingdom Values*

**W**hen I visited Japan, I was astonished at the quality of their service. Every waiter and waitress would get on one knee to take our order. My wife grew up in Japan, and she told me that the cultural mentality of the Japanese is: your customer is your god. Now, without mentioning names, there are a number of other countries I have visited that do not value politeness and good service like the Japanese do.

Different cultures value different things. **The Kingdom of God values people.** Our King values people so immensely that He hung on a bloody cross for six hours in order to save their souls. The King declares, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (see Matthew 22:39). Jesus wills that we practice love for people and a healthy love for self. You must learn to see yourself as loved if you are going to love others properly. The Kingdom values people, and you are a person. If someone doesn’t know how to love him or herself in a healthy way, they won’t know how to love you. Jesus didn’t teach a love of others *instead of* yourself, He taught us to love people *as you* love yourself.

You honor your King as much as you choose to live out His values. If you don’t value what He treasures, then you don’t value Him. Therefore, if you don’t love people, you don’t love or honor the King.

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If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen (1 John 4:20).

One of the most sobering examples of how seriously Jesus takes His culture shows up in Matthew 25:31-46.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?” The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (v. 31-40 NIV).

When the righteous stand before Jesus Christ, they will not be put to shame. The righteous are those who have both Kingdom citizenship and

culture. Culture is how you live all the time, not just when you are trying to impress people. It's your default mode, not a performance. **The righteous are kind, compassionate, and loving as a way of life.** They aren't just good to those of stature, wealth, and influence, but even unto the least. They live by the words of the King who commanded, "Treat others in the same way that you would want them to treat you" (Luke 6:31).

It's not uncommon to find people who will "suck up" only to those who can benefit them. But the righteous will walk in love and value people, because that is their culture. The righteous live the King's culture and as you can see, the King takes this *very* personally.

Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me." They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life (v. 41-46 NIV).

These people were shocked at Jesus' words – if they saw Jesus Himself in need, they would have surely come to His help. But that's the problem: there are people who claim to love Jesus, but reject His culture as a way of life. They are zealous for Jesus, but they do not value people. You honor your King as much as you practice His culture.

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### Discussion Questions:

- Why is it so hypocritical to say we love Jesus, but care less about people?
- How do you treat the people who cannot do anything for you?
- Have you allowed your heart to become cold and calloused towards people?

# 7

## *Kingdom Mindsets*

**M**indsets have to do with thinking patterns. Not just *what* you think, but *how* you think. **The Kingdom mindset is not a mosaic of people's opinions, but the reflection of the mind of Christ.**

For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16 NIV).

As you immerse yourself in the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), pay close attention to how Jesus' *thought*. He thinks very differently than the people in the world and especially different from those of the religious institutions. In Jesus' mindset, the supernatural was natural and miracles were normal. What's *crazy* to us was simply *culture* to Him. Therefore...

- When a storm rose up, He thought to rebuke it and calmed it.
- He thought to walk on water.
- When the wine ran out, He thought to turn the water into wine.
- When a person died, He thought to raise the dead.
- He thought to pay taxes with a coin from a fish's mouth.
- He saw five loaves and two fish and thought it enough to feed the multitude.

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As those with a Kingdom mindset, when we minister to the sick, we must not be intimidated by serious conditions. Jesus did not freak out over leprosy. When Jesus had to pray for a growth the size of a tennis ball, He didn't say to Himself, "Shoot! I wish he just had a headache." Jesus desired to impart His mindset to His disciples. He spoke words that would cause them to believe for miracles:

- "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26 NASB).
- "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:23 NASB).
- "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).

We will do more of the works of Jesus the more we share His mindset. The Apostle Paul and the other early church fathers operated in great miracles, and it's without coincidence that Paul testified, "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). We must start thinking and talking about miracles as the norm. That's being like Jesus. That's Kingdom culture.

### *Confidence in Sonship*

In Jesus' mind, He was absolutely confident in His sonship. Jesus continually referred to God as His Father, and He depended upon His Father all the time.

Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise (John 5:19 RSV).

This was one of His habits that drove the religious people crazy – they tried to stone Him for calling God His Father (see John 10:30-31). But



Jesus taught His disciples to also adapt this mindset of sonship and to start praying by saying, “*Our Father* in heaven, hallowed be your name” (Matthew 6:9).

Jesus had complete confidence when He talked with His Father. Before He raised Lazarus from the dead, He prayed, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me” (John 11:42 ESV).

Do you have that kind of confidence? When you pray, are you absolutely convinced that your Father hears and answers you? He wasn’t kicking and screaming to get His Father’s attention; He knew that His prayers were a done deal. Another time, Jesus said to His disciple, Peter, who was trying to physically defend Him with a little sword, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53 ESV). Jesus knew that a host of angels would be dispatched if He simply prayed to His Father. Do we have that same confidence? Let’s embrace it.

As a Son, Jesus knew His authority. He was never intimidated by demons, in fact, they were intimidated by Him. He commanded them to leave with a word and the demons would flee (see Matthew 8:16). The number of demons did not bother Jesus one bit; He knew His authority and walked in it.

### *Mind of Purity*

Jesus had a mind of purity. When an immoral woman started kissing and perfuming His feet, He was not grossed out nor did He lust after her – He responded with purity, not paranoia.

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And standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment (Luke 7:38 ESV).

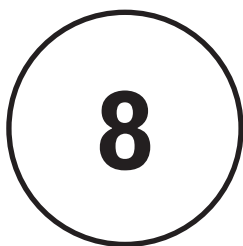
Jesus had so much love in His heart for people that He didn't have lust in His thinking. Even a beautiful woman – who hosted spirits of perversion – did not scare or affect Him negatively. **Because she couldn't affect Him negatively, He could affect her positively.** I'm not saying that we don't need to draw boundaries or that we are to put ourselves in seductive situations; I am merely presenting the mindset we need to grow into. The reason some of us can't help sinners is because our minds aren't pure enough... yet.

To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled (Titus 1:15 ESV).

For us to continually develop our Kingdom mindsets, we need to be consistent in our Kingdom diet. Which leads us to our next chapter.

### Discussion Questions:

- Did Jesus encourage a miracle mindset - a mind that expects miracles? How is a miracle mindset different from a rational one?
- How confident are you when you pray to God?
- Why is it necessary to have a mind of purity in order to reach out to sinners?



## *Kingdom Diet*

**D**ifferent cultures have different diets. You haven't fully experienced a culture until you have eaten their ethnic foods. What is Kingdom food? What are the ingredients of the Kingdom citizen's regular diet?

### *The Word*

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4 ESV).

God will speak to us personally each day through the scriptures and in your fellowship with Him. Hearing from God is vital to the Kingdom citizen's daily diet. Just as we do not function too well without food, we will not function effectively and efficiently without the life-giving Word of God.

Physical food feeds the body, while the Word of God feeds our spirit. It's more important for your spirit to be strong than it is for your physical body to be strong. I'm not saying we can't have both; One is just more important than the other. If you only feed your body and starve your spirit, guess which will be making all the decisions for you? Your body

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will rule you. Bodily appetites are what lead many people, but your body is not smart enough to run your life. Your body makes a great servant, but a terrible master. My body can assist my spirit to preach, teach, write, travel, pray for the sick, and encourage people, but if my body starts controlling my life, I will miss out on my destiny. Your spirit must rule over your body because your spirit is one with Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:17) and regenerated by the Holy Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

### *Plant Kingdom Seeds*

All of us are the product of a very intelligent and powerful seed, also known as sperm. The trees that we see, the fruit that we eat, and the flowers that we smell have all started with a brilliant seed. In the spiritual realm, our seed is the Word of God. When we learn how to plant and grow Kingdom seeds in our hearts, we will see a harvest in the physical realm.

Every time you open your Bible or sit under a Bible-based teaching, you are allowing seeds to be sown in the soil of your heart. The Kingdom of God spreads its influence in your heart through these seeds (see Matthew 13:19). Through Kingdom seeds, you can experience heaven on earth! The Word of God is a bag of seeds. Someone once said that for every need in your life, God's Word has the seed. When we know what our needs are, we need to find and plant the seed that matches our need.

If you want to see more healing take place through your ministry, get the seeds of healing from the Scriptures and plant them in your heart. If you want to see more financial provision and prosperity in your life, get the seeds on provision and prosperity in the Scriptures, and plant them in your heart. If you want to see more boldness in your life, plant the seeds that have to do with boldness. If you want to see more joy in

your life, plant the seeds that have to do with joy. If you want to see more of the wisdom of God in your life, plant the seeds that have to do with wisdom. If you want to see more of the love and holiness of God in your life, plant the seeds that have to do with God's love and holiness. If you want to see more of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit your life, plant the seeds that have to do with glory and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

It's ridiculous to expect to grow a banana tree if you have not planted those specific seeds. **It's just as foolish to expect the Kingdom of God to manifest in your life without devotion to the Word of God.** Some are angry at God for the barrenness of their own lives. But, if they would take God's Word and start gardening their own hearts, they would live an abundant life (John 10:10).

If there is an area of deficiency in my life, I've learned how to go to the Word and find the passages that have to do with that area and plant them, nurture them, and enjoy them. Secondly, I look for solid Bible-teaching from anointed teachers of the Word- who will help me get the seed deep into my heart. **In order to grow those seeds that have been planted in your heart, your heart needs to be watered in the presence of God.** This leads us to our next section.

## *The Presence and Power of God*

And have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come (Hebrews 6:5 ESV).

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,

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‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:37-41 ESV).

Do you know that you can drink the presence of God? When you drink of His presence, you feel more alive and your life becomes full of the power of God. God is the Source; therefore, when you drink from the Source, you become a resource. When you drink from the Source, you come to know Him, and then you are able to make Him known to others.

How do you drink of the presence of God? The answer to this question is very simple:

**First, you need to be thirsty.** This speaks of desire. The thirstiest are the best drinkers.

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God (Psalm 42:1 ESV).

**Secondly, we need to come to Jesus.** This means that we approach Him in faith. We must fix our eyes on Him in prayer and make Him the focus of our worship. It is when we get lost in Jesus that we begin drinking in the presence of God. Have you ever become so conscious of Jesus that you forgot about yourself? That’s how you drink in the presence of God. When you get lost in Jesus, the rivers of the Spirit are unleashed inside of you, and the tsunami of the Spirit demolishes all the forts that the enemy tried to put up in your soul. This is how you can stay spiritually fresh and clean.

In John 7:37-41, we see that Jesus desires us so much that He cried out and extended His invitation to all humanity. He sees how empty this world is! He sees how sin just sucks the life out of you! He knows that only He can truly satisfy the human soul, and He wants us full.

Previously, God extended this invitation through the prophet Isaiah:

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live (Isaiah 55:1-3a ESV).

What does your soul thirst for? If it's something that is of this world, it will cause your soul to become a desert. But if your soul thirsts for Jesus, then your soul will become an overflowing, gushing river of God's presence and power! That river, which flows from your spirit, will cleanse your soul and purify your life.

As Kingdom citizens, there are some things that we no longer eat; we don't have a diet of pollution and perversion. A friend of mine went for so long without eating meat, she no longer craved it. When she tried to eat it again, it made her sick. May we get so unfamiliar with what's spiritually unclean that we are unable to digest it!

**You crave what you feed on and you become what you eat.** We ought to be so full of the Word and the presence of God that we *become* the Word in flesh and the very cloud of God's glory.

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Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you (2 Corinthians 6:17 ESV).

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1 ESV).

### Discussion Questions:

- How is the Word of God like seeds? (See Matthew 13 for a deeper study)
- What are some keys to experiencing the presence of God?
- The author writes, “You crave what you feed on and you become what you eat.” What are your thoughts on that statement?



# 9

## *Five Pillars of Kingdom Living*

Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice (Proverbs 16:8 ESV).

**W**e all want to see growth in our influence, finances, businesses, ministries, and churches, etc., but according to this verse, it's better to have *little* with the culture of the Kingdom, than to have a *lot* without Kingdom culture. God prioritizes quality over quantity. Big quantities might impress people, but if void of Kingdom culture, God is not pleased or excited.

Since we are commanded to prioritize the Kingdom of God and its culture (see Matthew 6:33), we must have a better understanding of what living Kingdom culture is all about. We need more than assumptions; we need biblical definitions.

### *Back to Eden*

**The most perfect presentation of Kingdom culture is seen in the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis-** when heaven's culture reigned over this world. At this time, no one had to pray, "Your Kingdom come,

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Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven,” because His Kingdom was present and His will was established on earth.

Since the Fall, we have been on the road to recovery. When Jesus came on the scene, He declared, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10 NKJV). Now, you cannot lose something you never had. What humanity had and lost is that which Jesus came to restore. In the first two chapters of Genesis, Adam and Eve had Kingdom living- which is the practice of Kingdom culture. This was the very thing that Jesus came to restore and revive. Without coincidence, Jesus declared, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose” (Luke 4:43 ESV). The purpose of Jesus’ coming was to restore our purpose - Kingdom living.

**The perversion, sin, depression, sicknesses, tragedies, natural disasters, murders, divorces, human trafficking, and poverty that plagues our world today was not God’s original purpose.** If this were all God’s intent, why did Jesus spend so much time and effort to defeat everything we just listed? Jesus came with a vision to see the Kingdom reestablished on the earth. He came to undo the mess that Adam got us into. We need to take a good look at life in the Garden of Eden before the sin factor caused us to miss God’s perfect will. Jesus even made references to Genesis 1-2 in order to reveal God’s perfect will (see Matthew 19:8). What is clear is that God wanted to give Adam the Kingdom. This will always be God’s heart for humanity, since it was His original intent.

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32 ESV).

What does it mean that the Father wants to give us the Kingdom?

## *Five Pillars of Kingdom Living*

It means much more than just taking us to heaven; it speaks of the restoration of His original purpose for humanity, which is Kingdom living. I have some good news: Jesus will not fail in His purpose to restore Kingdom living to humanity! God sees all of time, and the future is clear to Him. The kingdoms of this world will one day become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ (see Revelation 11:15). In that day, there will be full restoration of Kingdom living (see Revelation 21:1-8). God's purpose for humanity will once again prevail! In the first two chapters of Genesis and the last two chapters of Revelation, we see Kingdom living in unhindered manifestation.

**Although recovery will be in fullness when Jesus returns, it has already begun with the coming of the Spirit** (See Matthew 16:28)! The Holy Spirit has come to help you rebuild the five pillars of Kingdom living in your life and world; He didn't come just to beam you up to heaven after you die. Don't just say Kingdom living will happen *then*, when it's available *now* through the Holy Spirit. You are *presently* in spiritual union with Christ so you can *presently* enjoy the Kingdom life (See Colossians 3:1-4). With that said, here are the five pillars of Kingdom living that you can enjoy and express today:

### **1. *We are God's children and we reflect His divine nature.***

Let's listen to the conversation the Creator had with Himself as He designed humanity.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." — Genesis 1:26 NIV

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Adam was more than the creation of God; he was the *son* of God (see Luke 3:38). He had the very DNA of God, something that no other creature had. God's nature is love (1 John 4:8), and Adam was to display God's perfect love. God is the Creator, and Adam was to display the creative abilities He inherited from his Father. God is pure and holy, and Adam was to radiate purity and holiness.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was the very image and exact representation of the Father (see Hebrews 1:3). Jesus came to re-established that first pillar of Kingdom culture. **He came not to be the *exception*, but our *example*.** Through Christ, this pillar can be established in our lives because *as He is, so are we in this world* (1 John 4:17).

### **2. *We are the powerful, dynamic leaders on this planet.***

Cheetahs are fashioned to run. Eagles are made to soar. Parrots are designed to talk. Rabbits are formed to hop. Humans are made for dominion- which speaks of powerful, successful, and influential living. Every human being desires power, success, and influence, for this is our design. **If you aren't taking dominion, you aren't living the Kingdom life.** The first thing God commanded Adam and Eve was, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28).

We are created to have effective leadership on this planet. Notice that Adam and Eve were never commanded to dominate other people, but to dominate in life through success, productivity, and influential leadership. Most people enjoy listening to a non-cheesy motivational speaker, who makes you believe that they can change the world! Why? He or she is trying to connect you to your original purpose- dominion.

Contrary to religious thought, the desire to be successful and influential is part of God's original design; It's not evil; it's actually divine. Needless to say, Jesus modeled for us a powerful life and impeccable leadership! **He gave us a *sample* of what we can be through Him.** This is second pillar of the Kingdom life that He came to restore to us!

### **3. *We trust our Father enough to obey Him.***

Even in the Garden, God had standards for His children. God put a forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden and commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of it. He was not setting them up for failure. He wanted to test their trust. **Like any wise and loving father, God hoped His children would trust Him enough to take His words seriously.** The tree was not a malicious mousetrap; it was a simple test of faith.

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die. — Genesis 2:16-17 NIV

God still wants us to trust Him enough to obey Him. Religion is a multi-trillion dollar industry because people intuitively long for a deity to trust and follow. Plants and animals don't express such a longing, why do we? God designed us to trust and obey Him. This is what Jesus perfectly modeled for us, as He kept the laws of His Father perfectly. If we want to live the Kingdom life, we need to uphold and follow the standards of our Father, not *just* because we fear negative consequences, but because we trust in the goodness of Father and believe His way is the best. As long as Adam and Eve trusted the Father enough to obey Him, they enjoyed heaven on earth. As soon as they lost trust, they lost Kingdom living.

### 4. *We enjoy empowering relationships.*

Eve entered Adam's life to be his helper (see Genesis 2:18). She was to empower Adam to be an even better man, and he was to empower Eve to become an even stronger woman. Their relationship was to be an ever-increasing cycle of empowerment- **for God's purpose for relationships is empowerment.** When presented with Eve, the first thing Adam said was, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:23 NIV). Adam immediately equates Eve with his very "bone and flesh." We men are simple creatures. If I ask a man, "Do you want strong bones or brittle bones?" he would respond, "Strong bones!" If I ask any man, "Would you prefer to have strong muscles or just jiggly flab?" his answer would be obvious. Any man who tells you that he's never flexed in the mirror is lying through his teeth. Men pride themselves in being strong. When Adam said you are my bone and my flesh, he was communicating his desire to empower Eve.

God designed humans to enjoy horizontal relationships, not just a vertical one. While we are to be empowered through our vertical relationship with God, we are also to be empowered through our horizontal relationships with others. This is an important pillar in His Kingdom. Suppression, control, manipulation, betrayal, suspicion, hatred, bitterness, and heartbreak were never part of God's design; They have no place in God's Kingdom.

As Adam and Eve practiced relationships according to God's purpose, we read, "The man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25 NLT). Since they enjoyed empowering relationships, there was no pretense, deception, stress, or fear in their relationship. This is Kingdom living!

Jesus came emphasizing empowering relationships. He taught us that the *greatest is the servant*, for a servant has mastered the art of empowerment (see Matthew 23:11). Jesus modeled empowering relationships by helping those He came into contact with. Then, He sent us His Spirit, so that we would be empowered (see Acts 1:8).

## **5. *We enjoy intimacy with God.***

Adam and Eve walked with God. They went on special dates with Him. His presence was closer to them than the air they breathed. They knew His voice and had direct access to Him. In fact, Adam, Eve, and God were co-workers and close partners!

Now the Lord The Creator had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. — Genesis 2:19 NIV

In the passage above, God helped Adam to release His great potential by giving him a divine assignment. Amazingly, Adam named every member of the animal Kingdom! Through intimacy with God, you will find your assignment. As you start working on your assignment, you will release your hidden potential. **True fruitfulness comes from real intimacy with God.** The secret to Jesus' matchless impact on planet Earth was His connectedness with His Father. We were made for this kind of relationship with God; Life is empty without it.

## ***Tragic Loss***

When Adam and Eve were submitted to the Kingdom of God, they were able to live out their true purpose and destiny. All five pillars of

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Kingdom living were upholding their everyday lives. **But, the day they declared independence from the King, they lost His Kingdom and all five pillars came crashing down.** When you close your membership to your gym or cancel your subscription to your cable provider, you immediately lose all the privileges. When Adam and Eve declared independence from the Kingdom of God, they were no longer able to enjoy the full benefits of the Kingdom of God.

Adam and Eve committed high treason against God's Kingdom, by siding with the opposing kingdom. Consequently, they forfeited Kingdom citizenship, culture, and living. Immediately, humanity as a whole:

- Became sinners by nature and lost royal sonship.
- Became slaves to the devil, sickness, corruption, and misfortunes, instead of ruling in life.
- Became doubters who lost faith in God and His commandments.
- Became distant from God and dysfunctional in relationships.
- Became enemies of God.

### *The Restoring Work of Jesus Christ*

The story doesn't end here! Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ appeared on the scene and boldly declared, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). As we covered in Chapter Two, some people think that Jesus came to start a new religion, but that's not true – Jesus Christ's mission was to restore us to our original purpose- Kingdom living!

Throughout the Scriptures, we learn that Jesus is our Redeemer. A redeemer is one who *buys back* someone or something. Because Jesus completed His mission- died on the cross and rose again, we can access the Kingdom through Him. Our membership and subscription can



be renewed! Kingdom citizenship, culture, and living can be restored in our lives.

Although Jesus is just as passionate about restoring you to your original purpose – Kingdom living – He will not force His way into your life. He will not restore your original purpose unless you *allow* Him to. **But when you say *yes* to Jesus Christ and receive Him as your Savior and Lord, then all that He came to redeem becomes redeemed in *your* life.** When you surrender your life to Jesus Christ, amazing benefits instantly follow:

- You receive a new nature (see 2 Corinthians 5:17)!
- You now have the power to rule in life (see Romans 5:17).
- You have the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of you, which will empower you to trust in your Heavenly Father's love and keep His commandments (see Romans 8:2).
- You have the power of God's perfect love, which enables you to enjoy empowering relationships (Romans 5:5).
- Your access to God has been restored; you're a partner with Him (see 2 Corinthians 5:18 & 1 Corinthians 3:9).

If you have received Jesus Christ into your life, the five pillars of Kingdom living can now be re-established in your life! You don't have to settle for anything less. Don't let Satan hold back a single pillar from you. 1) Reflect God's nature as a child of God with a new nature. 2) Be a powerful, influential, and successful leader in your generation. 3) Trust your heavenly Father enough to uphold and obey His laws. 4) Enjoy and extend empowering relationships. 5) Plunge into deeper intimacy with God. When all five pillars are erected in your life, the nations will call you blessed! You will be a magnet for the Kingdom, drawing people back to our King and their original purpose- Kingdom living.

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### Discussion Questions:

- Why is God more concerned with quality over quantity?
- How do people who don't know Jesus try to scratch their itch for Kingdom living?
- Which pillar are you enjoying the most and which pillar you enjoying the least?

# 10

## *Kingdom Culture Moves In*

**T**hroughout the Old Testament, God was laying the foundation for the restoration of Kingdom culture. He found a man named Enoch who learned to lovingly walk with Him by faith, giving us an example of what intimacy with God can look like. He found a man named Abram, who would trust Him wholeheartedly and blessed him, heralding him as “the father of faith” (Romans 4:16). God was working to re-establish the culture of the Kingdom, which includes faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Then God called a man named Moses, who would present the righteous standards of the Kingdom, for righteous living is Kingdom living. Through the Ten Commandments that God gave through Moses, the people learned of Kingdom culture (see Exodus 20).

The Ten Commandments:

- 1) I am the Lord, your God.
- 2) You will not bring false idols before me.
- 3) Do not take the name of the Lord in vain.
- 4) Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
- 5) Honor your father and mother.

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- 6) You will not kill/murder.
- 7) You will not commit adultery.
- 8) You will not steal.
- 9) You will not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- 10) You will not covet your neighbor's wife (or anything that belongs to your neighbor).

According to Jesus, the Ten Commandments are summed up in two commands of loving God and others (Matthew 22:40). *Love is Kingdom culture*. The Ten Commandments look like love, and love looks like the Ten Commandments.

### *Laws are Norms and Customs*

The Greek word for law is *nomos*, and this is where we get our word *norms*. Another Greek word for law is *ethos*, which speaks of *customs, habits, character, and philosophy*. Norms, customs, habits, character, and philosophy- equate to culture. Therefore, laws contain culture and culture contains laws. **The laws of God represent the very culture of God.**

By law, in Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive cars or compete in the Olympics. This continues to enforce their culture of inequality. By law, slavery is illegal in the United States and therefore it remains culturally unacceptable. By law, in Singapore, those who litter on the street will be beaten with a cane, so littering continues to be uncommon. Culture creates laws and then laws continually enforce the culture. God's culture of love is what birthed the Ten Commandments, but we need to continually uphold these laws in order to protect His culture.

When God gave the Israelites His laws to uphold, He was asking them to uphold His culture. Yet, there was a problem: the Israelites were not given the power to live Kingdom culture! So, for the most part, they failed miserably in keeping God's norms. Therefore, God's laws revealed the depths of their depravity and their desperate need for help. In speaking about how God's laws revealed the broken state of humanity, Paul writes,

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." ... So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful...." (Romans 7:7,12-13).

### *Prophecy of a New Heart Culture*

While the Israelites failed to keep the culture of God, it was prophesied that one day God's culture would not just be words on tablets for people to read and study, but that Kingdom culture would be imparted into the hearts of God's people by His Spirit.

"The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant,

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though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33 NIV).

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules (Ezekiel 36:26-27 ESV).

### *Mr. Kingdom Culture Moves In*

This is exactly what Jesus promised to impart to His followers through the coming of the Holy Spirit. **The Holy Spirit is Mr. Kingdom Culture.** He will teach you everything you need to know about the culture of heaven. While those without the Holy Spirit will never see, hear, or understand Kingdom culture, we will understand the depths of our home’s culture.

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-10 ESV).

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God (1 Corinthians 2:12 ESV).

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (John 14:26 NIV).

Not only will we understand Kingdom culture, the Holy Spirit empowers us to live it out (see Acts 1:8). This gives me great comfort because He is here to empower us! **The Holy Spirit gives us more than a revelation of the culture; He gives us the empowerment to enjoy it and spread it.**

Do you see why Jesus said that although John the Baptist was the greatest man in the Old Covenant, the least in the Kingdom of heaven would be greater than John (see Matthew 11:11)? We have the indwelling Holy Spirit. When iPads first came out, my sister graciously bought me the 3G iPad. While the other types of iPads needed to get under a wifi signal in order to access data, I had access to data anywhere and anytime! While the Old Covenant believer functioned like the iPad without 3G or 4G connection built-in, the born-again citizen of the Kingdom is like the 3G or 4G iPad- with connection to heaven all the time through the indwelling Holy Spirit. **While the Old Covenant people had to be in a particular place or around a special person in order to connect with God, we have access to the King and His Kingdom all the time.** No wonder we are better off.

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14 ESV). Kingdom culture glorifies Jesus by reflecting Him. The Holy Spirit has come to enable you to glorify Jesus as you accurately represent Him. There is no excuse for continuing to live according to the culture of this world, for we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us. We’ve been given much, and therefore, much is expected of us.

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Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more (Luke 12:48b ESV).

A Kingdom cultured person's life will be full of the fruits of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. As mentioned in Galatians 5, the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit are products of Kingdom culture.

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Longsuffering
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control

The nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 12-14), are manifestations of Kingdom culture.

- The Word of Knowledge
- The Word of Wisdom
- The Gift of Prophecy
- The Gift of Faith
- The Gift of Healing
- The Working of Miracles
- The Discerning of Spirits
- Different Kinds of Tongues
- The Interpretation of Tongues



## *It's a Partnership*

Now, let's not forget that the Holy Spirit is your Helper, not your Mr. Do-It-All. **It's your responsibility to pursue Kingdom culture – studying the Kingdom and praying for it.** As we do our part, the Holy Spirit will do His part. He will help you to be re-cultured! He will continually fuel your desire for Kingdom culture. As you spend time studying the life and teachings of Jesus and the Kingdom principles buried from Genesis to Revelation, the Holy Spirit, who lives within you, will transform the way you think and live, enabling you to enjoy and express Kingdom culture.

## **Discussion Questions:**

- Why is it important to honor the laws of God?
- Why do we have no excuse for not living Kingdom culture?
- What does it mean for us since the Holy Spirit is not Mr. Do-It-All?





# **PART 2**

*Kingdom Culture*  
*vs.*  
*World's Culture*



# 11

## *Not of This World (Part 1)*

**W**hile we saw an accurate picture of Kingdom culture from Genesis 1-2, in Genesis 3, we see another culture beginning to prevail. **When Adam and Eve came into agreement with Satan, they gave him access to establish his culture on the earth.** Satan became the god of this world (see 2 Corinthians 4:4) and took full advantage of Adam and Eve's open invitation. As we covered in chapter 3, the culture of this world comes straight from the heart of Satan. Since he is a rebel by nature, everything about his culture defies the Kingdom of God. Therefore, Jesus came to pull the culture of this world out of us and impart the culture of heaven into us.

Jesus doesn't want us to leave the world; He chose to leave us in it so that we would transform it. We can only transform the world if we have no cultural similarities to it. Light is able to change darkness because it is intrinsically different.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world (John 17:15-16 ESV).

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The next two chapters will present the culture or spirit of this world. **Keep in mind that you are not of this world and the world's culture is the opposite of Kingdom culture.**

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God (1 Corinthians 2:12).

## THE SPIRITS OF THIS WORLD, EXPOSED

### 1. *Unbelief*

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, *“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”* The woman said to the serpent, *“We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”* *“You will not surely die,”* the serpent said to the woman. *“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”* (Genesis 3:1-5 NIV).

Mankind's fall into sin all began with Satan enticing Adam and Eve to be faithless toward God. Satan worked to get Adam and Eve to mistrust God and thereby refuse to live according to His revealed standards. **Questioning God's goodness is from Satan's culture, and it will open the door of your life for the rest of hell's culture to move into your life.**

## *Not of This World (Part 1)*

The opposite of the spirit of unbelief is the spirit of faith. Believing in God's goodness and acting upon His Word is what opens the door to experience God's entire Kingdom. If we stay in unbelief, we will stay shut out of the Kingdom.

So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:19 ESV).

Jesus said, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15 ESV). Now, you might be thinking about a bratty nine-year-old who is a smarty-pants, but this Greek word for *child* was also the word used to describe Jesus and Moses when they were infants (i.e. Luke 1:59; Hebrews 11:23). Infants who are completely dependent upon their parents display the kind of faith that accesses the Kingdom of God. A baby doesn't think they know better than Mom and Dad. They cry when they are separated from their parents; they are not ready to leave home, nor have any desire to. This humble dependency upon the Father enables us to access the Kingdom.

## **2. Temptation**

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it (Genesis 3:6 NIV).

Eve's job was to help Adam, not to tempt him to fail. **Tempting somebody to miss God's best for their lives is the spirit of this world.** Billboards, television shows, and movies tempt people to be greedy, lustful, and violent- thus, missing God's best for their lives. Satan's

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middle name is *Tempter* (see Matthew 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 3:5). Go figure why his culture is full of temptation! Most likely, you have been tempted to cheat, fight, experiment with drugs, and indulge in some sexual immorality. Temptation is not hard to find because it's the spirit of the world.

I remember having dinner with a minister in a restaurant and there was a television screen in front of us displaying a provocative music video. He looked at me and said, "That T.V. is full of the spirit of this world." The spirit of this world is the spirit of seduction. The boyfriend or girlfriend who tempts their significant other to fornicate is operating under Satan's culture. As Kingdom people, we shouldn't be overcome by seduction, and we most certainly must never practice this art. Only in Satan's culture do we tempt each other to sin.

There may be those in your life who speak badly about others and tear down other people's character. They may tempt you to buy into their words and become bitter toward someone. Two of the six things that God absolutely hates are a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers (see Proverbs 6:19). God hates it when you spread bitterness by sharing untrue or half-true information. **Bitterness will cause a person to fail in life, so you don't want to spread that poison.**

Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes (Matthew 18:7 ESV)!

Determine this — not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way (Romans 14:13 NASB).



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It's important not to take an offense, but it's just as important not to give an offense unnecessarily. Jesus taught, "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment [being offended]; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council [offending somebody]; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire [offending somebody]" (Matthew 5:22 ESV).

Paul wrote to parents saying, "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21 NIV). Parents need to discipline their children, but not offend them to the point of bitterness, because that's tempting them to fail.

Jesus pushed this issue even further by instructing us to go make peace with anyone who might have been hurt by us. We shouldn't just go to church, pray, read our Bibles, and act as if everything is okay if you sense that somebody is bitter towards you – first go apologize and make it right.

"So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24 ESV).

We are to do whatever we can to live peacefully with others (see Romans 12:18). I'm not saying to compromise values, but let's be careful not to hurt people when it's not necessary. Throughout the Bible, we are warned not to put a stumbling block in front of our brother or sister. **If we ever intentionally try to harm someone, it will backfire.**

If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead (Proverbs 26:27 NLT).

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Kingdom culture helps others to succeed by loving, mentoring, encouraging, and praying for each other. Whose success are you committed to? What are you presently doing to empower someone? Don't be a tempter; be a blessing!

### 3. Self-rejection

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (Genesis 3:7).

Shame was the first response to the fall into sin. Shame is self-rejection and self-despising. Rejecting and despising yourself is not from God, but from another culture! After loving God, Jesus explained that the most important commandment was, “You shall love your neighbor *as yourself*.” There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31 ESV). We know that loving your neighbor is important, but what does it mean to love your neighbor as *yourself*?

This implies that you must love yourself properly in order to love your neighbor properly. Those who are bound to self-rejection are quick to reject others. **What fills your heart is what overflows from your life.** Is it love or rejection? Those who feel condemned, condemn. Those who feel forgiven, forgive. What do you feel about yourself?

The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks (Luke 6:45 ESV).

When Amnon raped his own half-sister, Tamar, committing incest, he then hated her with intense hatred. Amnon really hated himself for this

evil act; therefore, his self-hatred spilled over into hatred for the one he had loved (see 2 Samuel 13:15). Those who are sinking in condemnation don't know how to give grace to anybody; they can't give what they don't have. Our mirrors become the lenses through which we see others.

Kingdom culture is one of adoption, not rejection. The spirit of adoption is the opposite of an orphan spirit. In fact, it *replaces* the orphan spirit. Orphans do not experience love by those who should have taught them how to love. As a result, love is a foreign concept. But when an orphan is *adopted*, they can experience love, find self-worth, feel special for being chosen, and know what it feels like to have someone believe in them. **The spirit of adoption is our culture. We know we are loved, valued, special, and believed in.** Therefore, we love and value people, making them feel special and believing in them.

The Scriptures proclaim we “have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Romans 8:15 ESV).

#### **4. Materialism**

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (Genesis 3:7).

When Adam and Eve lost their inner security, they tried to find it in external “stuff,” and made themselves new outfits out of fig leaves. Materialism is being preoccupied with worldly or material things. We might not dress ourselves in fig leaves to feel better about ourselves, but we do dress ourselves in fancy clothes, nice cars, jewelry, expensive toys, etc. Those consumed with materialism find their value in what they wear and drive, where they live, how much money they have in the bank, etc., but this is not Kingdom culture!

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There is nothing wrong with shopping and owning nice things as long as it is not your source of security. Even before the Fall, Adam and Eve were given nice things by God, but after the Fall, they tried to find security in *things* rather than in God.

This spirit of materialism makes people greedy. It makes them discontent with what they have, and they allow the advertising companies to persuade them that they cannot live without the newest and the best. **But in the Kingdom, contentment is our culture.** We find our value and security in God so even if we lose our car or house, it's okay. We are still at peace because the *stuff* was never our source of peace.

Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment  
(1 Timothy 6:6).

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid (John 14:27 ESV).

**Kingdom people are not obsessed with money; we are focused on heaven and spreading its culture over all the earth.** The Kingdom's agenda is our preoccupation and priority. Jesus says that we cannot serve God and money (see Matthew 6:24). Money must not make your God-decisions: What you will and will not do for God. God must control your money decisions: What you will and will not do with your money.

Do you allow God to control your relationship with money? Or does money control your relationship with God? Kingdom norm says God is your master and money is your servant. When money is your master, and you try to make God your servant, you are way out of order.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and

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steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-21 ESV).

Kingdom people don't treasure the *things* money can buy; rather, we treasure what God treasures. We are fueled by and focused on His Kingdom. Only shallow, worldly people fixate upon *things* and money. Let your heart be preoccupied with the Kingdom, not money. Even if you have money, money must not have you.

As Kingdom people, we seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness and as a by-product all things are added unto us (see Matthew 6:33). What are we thinking about all day? It should not be a new car, house, or toy. Set your mind on heaven's agenda: Bringing glory to our King.

If you bank your life upon the things of this world, you are on sinking sand, for worldly things aren't forever. Even all the plastic surgery in the world cannot keep your beauty from fleeing. **But if you bank your heart in the Kingdom, you have nothing to fear.**

### *Where is Your Focus?*

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money (Matthew 6:22-24).

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Your eyes speak of your focus. If you are focused on the right things, your life will be right. **If you are focused on money, bound to materialism, you will never become a good servant of God.** You cannot be a lover of money and an effective servant of God. Jesus taught that Kingdom people don't worry about materialistic things, since worrying doesn't solve anything; we stay focused on the Kingdom and trust our Father to take care of us.

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:25-33 ESV).

## *Tap into Heaven's Provision*

To Kingdom people, financial blessing is a means to bless others – we are generous people. Jesus saw thousands of hungry people who so desperately needed provision from heaven, so He lifted His eyes to heaven and blessed the small meal, which a boy donated. The disciples then quickly distributed the resources that heaven had multiplied. Heaven wants to prosper you so that there is enough for your needs and to be a blessing to others (see Matthew 14:16-21).

Here are three simple keys to tap into heaven's provision:

- 1) **Like the boy, sow your seed.** The boy could have eaten his meal, but decided to sow it, and from that seed, came thousands of meals, plus twelve baskets full of leftovers. In the world's culture, giving is not necessarily the way to increase, but it is in the Kingdom! Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38 ESV).
- 2) **Like Jesus, look to heaven.** It doesn't matter who signs your checks every month, always see God as your Source. I love when Abraham told a king, "I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'" (Genesis 14:23 ESV). Abraham never looked to people to make him rich; he trusted in God and wanted only God to get the glory for his wealth. Abraham then gave a tithe of his increase to a priest of God, Melchizedek. Giving a tithe of your increase is a way to give glory to heaven for your provision!

Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the first-fruits of all your produce (Proverbs 3:9 ESV).

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### 3) Like the disciples, share the resources with those in need.

While the world's culture is lustful and finds its value in possessions, we are loving and find our joy in giving our possessions away.

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35 ESV).

Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed (Proverbs 19:17 ESV).

We can be generous with our resources because we recognize that our possessions aren't really *ours*. When the disciples were dispensing the bread and fish, they realized they didn't *own* what they were giving. They were responsible for getting those goods to the people their Master instructed them to give to. Recently, somebody donated about thirty thousand dollars worth of equipment to help me start our church. When I responded with a heartfelt *thank you*, she stopped me and said, "Thank God, this stuff is not mine, it's His." We are mere stewards and dispensers, not owners.

### Discussion Questions:

- Do you believe in the goodness of God towards you? Why does the quality of your life depend upon how you answer this question?
- Whose success are you committed to? What are you doing to helping him, her, or them to succeed?
- What are you doing with your finances in order to help those in need?



# 12

## *Not of This World (Part 2)*

Now Absalom was praised as the most handsome man in all Israel. He was flawless from head to foot (2 Samuel 14:25 NLT).

Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel (2 Samuel 15:6 ESV).

**A**bsalom was the most handsome of all of David's sons; he had matchless charm and unbeatable charisma. But he was also a manipulator and a master of scheming who intentionally turned the hearts of the people away from his father David. Although David was God's anointed and appointed king, Absalom began to rule in Israel through the popular demand of the people – Absalom turned on his own father, became his archenemy, and stole his throne. David was pushed out of his own kingdom.

Yet, David rightfully got his throne back. As Absalom was riding his mule, his long, flowing hair got caught on a tree, and he inadvertently hung himself (talk about a bad hair day). The humble tree dethroned the pseudo king. When Absalom was defeated, the people of Israel came to their senses and began murmuring among themselves:

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The king (David) delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled out of the land from Absalom. But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why do you say nothing about bringing the king back (2 Samuel 19:9-10)?

The people of Israel finally brought back their legitimate king. David is a picture of the legitimate Kingdom of God and its culture, while Absalom represents Satan's kingdom and culture, which is the spirit of this world. The people of Israel represent your heart. Which of the two rival kingdoms will have your heart?

Through the cross of Jesus Christ – a humble tree – Satan was defeated and now, by the work of the Spirit, people everywhere are realizing that they need the Kingdom of God and its culture back on Planet Earth! They realize that they need to submit to God and His anointed and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. **As David took back the hearts of the Israelites and re-established his kingdom, God wants to take back our hearts and re-establish His kingdom on earth.** Let's continue to contrast the two cultures, so we can purify ourselves from the illegitimate kingdom. Which Kingdom is ruling your heart?

## MORE SPIRITS OF THIS WORLD EXPOSED

### 5. *Fear*

And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and *I was afraid*, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10 ESV).

## *Not of This World (Part 2)*

After the Fall, Adam and Eve told God that they were afraid. Immediately, God asks who has influenced them to be fearful: “Who told you that you were naked?” (Genesis 3:11). Before the Fall, they related to God and others with confidence but now, relational paranoia had entered their lives – this is the origin of shyness. Shyness is defined as a social phobia or social anxiety, which often stems from your culture. **There is no shyness in Kingdom culture.** Now, having a quieter personality is fine, but you can be less talkative without being shy. In our culture, we are righteous people who are bold as lions. The Holy Spirit always makes people bold and confident.

The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion (Proverbs 28:1 ESV).

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly (Acts 4:31 NIV).

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16 ESV).

**Another word for fear is stress.** Satan is stressed out because he knows that his time is short (see Revelation 12:12). As kingdom people, peace is our culture. Our King is the Prince of peace. We don't have to stress out about anything, because we trust our King in everything. As we spend personal time with the Prince of peace, more of His culture of peace is imparted to us.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your

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requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7 ESV).

**Anger is a manifestation of fear.** People have outbursts of anger because of indwelling fear. If you have fear in your heart, you will impart fear into your relationships. But in the Kingdom, God's perfect love abolishes fear (see 1 John 4:18). When we come to know His love, our anger issues will be expelled. Kingdom-cultured people believe that because God loves us, everything is going to be all right, so there is no need to get angry. Additionally, Kingdom-cultured people love God and believe the promise that God works all things together for those who love Him (see Romans 8:28).

**Fear is not part of our culture because only powerless people are afraid.** But as Kingdom citizens, we have the power to see situations transformed through God's grace, our faith and prayer, and God-given wisdom. We have the power to stay calm and self-controlled even through difficult situations. Those who are overcome by fear are those who are powerless, loveless, and without self-control. As Kingdom citizens, we have the spirit of power, love, and self-control to live above fear!

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7 ESV).

### 6. *Criticism*

The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" (Genesis 3:12 NIV).

## *Not of This World (Part 2)*

Instead of repenting, Adam is now criticizing his wife. He shifted the blame on her rather than acknowledge his own sin. **In the world's culture, the first response to personal failure is to be upset, criticize, and blame somebody else.** The world culture is an expert at the “blame game.” When you point your finger to criticize, rather than reach out your hand to help, you are operating in an inferior culture. In the Kingdom, we seek to empower each other, instead of tearing one another apart. We work toward solutions instead of just pointing out the problems. Our first response to someone's shortcoming is to pray, not throw stones.

You will never pray for somebody you criticize and you  
will never criticize somebody you really pray for.  
— Bayless Conley

It's always easier to “correct” someone behind their back than to their face, but Kingdom people “speak the truth in love” (see Ephesians 4:15). We ought to seek to help people by gently and kindly sharing the truth. You can be right about something and yet be so wrong in how you shared that truth. Your delivery is as important as your content.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, *you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.* Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted (Galatians 6:1 ESV).

Those cultured by heaven seek to restore people, not chop them down. Yes, we must step out to correct those in sin, but it must be with a loving and gentle spirit, and we must be careful not to allow a critical spirit to overtake us. **Once you lose your compassion for others, you become critical.** This critical spirit will make you a professional at detecting other's issues but an amateur at seeing your own, which

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leads to deception. The critical spirit destroys individuals, relationships, and churches.

How can you say to your brother, “Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,” when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye (Luke 6:42 ESV).

Jesus was very direct with people, but He never lost compassion. It was His compassion that led Him to be tortured for our sins. The spirit of the Kingdom is compassion. The critical spirit won’t die for anyone; it will hammer the person who made a mistake on the cross.

### 7. Gossip

Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Genesis 3:13 ESV).

As there is tension between Adam and Eve, Eve feels inferior and tries to make herself better by speaking negatively about somebody else; she shifts the blame upon the serpent. **In the world’s culture, people speak negatively about others in order to feel better about themselves.** This is the spirit of gossip. Gossip magazines make so much money because people enjoy reading about the misfortunes of others in order to feel better about their own lives. But as Kingdom citizens, we don’t need to put someone else down in order to feel good about ourselves. Kingdom culture speaks words of encouragement, validation, truth, and destiny (*As we covered in Chapter 4*).

## **8. Religion**

In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast (Genesis 4:3-5 NIV).

Cain wants to worship and connect with God, but in his own way, not God's way. He doesn't want to come to God through the shedding of blood, which is what the Kingdom demanded. **When someone is zealous for God but is ignorant or rejecting of Kingdom culture, they are under the spirit of religion.** Yet, Kingdom people worship in "spirit and truth" - with fervency and alignment to God's ways (John 4:23). (*We will cover the religious spirit in greater depths later, in Part Three*)

## **9 Jealousy**

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted" (Genesis 4:6-7 NIV).

Cain envied Abel because his brother was succeeding in life and Cain wasn't – the spirit of jealousy has now entered the earth. Cain's problem was not Abel; Abel was not the hindrance to Cain's success. God told Cain that he needed to improve himself. Jealousy is such a waste of time! **Kingdom people understand their potential, uniqueness, and value, so they focus on improvement.**

### 10. *Poverty*

The spirit of poverty was one contributor to Cain's anger toward Abel. This is the "there is never enough" mentality, which believes the lie that there is not enough of God's goodness to go around. Therefore, Cain foolishly concluded that if Abel was blessed and accepted by God, there was not enough blessing and acceptance for him, too. Those with a poverty spirit think like a pauper instead of a prince. They see God's favor as scraps and don't know that there is *more than enough* to go around. Therefore, they always blame their lack on somebody's abundance.

Remember the woman who anointed Jesus with very expensive perfume (Matthew 26:6-13)? Judas tried to stop her by basically saying, "Jesus you can't have something that expensive; what about the poor?" Judas had a poverty spirit, which led to his greed. Those who never think there is enough money are greedy for money. When you have a prosperity mindset, you can be generous.

**People of the Kingdom culture believe that there is more than enough blessing to go around.** Somebody's blessing doesn't make Kingdom people insecure, but excited because they just saw what is on God's menu of blessings. Kingdom culture believes that God is okay with us enjoying nice things, and since they don't have a "never-enough" mentality, they are generous. They are not wasteful or irresponsible with the resources entrusted to them, but they *are* generous.

### 11. *Competition*

Cain was in competition with Abel and thought, "We can't all win, so I will have to cut you off. We can't all be at the top, so I'm going to push you off." That's a lie, for we can *all* be at the top! We can all be the



head and not the tail, because God has a special mountain – destiny – designed just for you. We can all win the gold, because there is a race that God has specifically designed for each of us. Kingdom people don't see life as a competition, but rather as a conquest. In a competition, there is only one winner. In a conquest, there are many winners!

**Kingdom-cultured people realize that the only way to win this world is if all of us are operating at our highest potential!** Therefore, we seek to help each other. The country with the most gold-medalists usually ends up on top of the world in the Olympics. We need to empower each other to all become gold-medalists in our individual purposes, so the Kingdom can be on top of this world.

## **12. Bitterness.**

Obviously, Cain was bitter. Bitter people say, "I'm not happy, and it's all your fault." They blame others and expect everyone else to change. It is they who are in need of change because they have made somebody else completely responsible for their own joy level. That's dangerous and foolish. On the other hand, Kingdom people understand that God is their Source of joy, so the world can't take it away. They know how to "rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4).

## **13. Murder.**

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him (Genesis 4:8 NIV).

Cain ended up killing his own brother because the spirit of this world is the spirit of murder. You may have never killed anyone, but have you

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destroyed somebody's reputation with inaccurate information? This is called character assassination. Kingdom people choose not to hate or speak maliciously of people. One of the greatest regrets I have is the negative and subjective things I've said of others, because I can't delete those words from their memory.

Murder speaks of violence, and worldly people are violent people. You fill yourself with the world's culture when you regularly watch violent movies and play violent video games. On the flip-side, the Kingdom's culture is meekness. We never control people through fear or violence, but we impact lives through our love, humility, and gentleness. **You are sporting the clothing of the Kingdom when you respond to difficult people with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.**

Blessed are the *meek*, for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5 ESV).

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12 NIV).

### 14. *Independence.*

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9 NIV)

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment" (Proverbs 18:1 ESV).

An independent spirit, which isolates you and says that you don't

need people, or you're better off on your own, is selfish and foolish. This is a selfish mindset because it withholds the gifts, purpose, and God-given capabilities that are given to you to share with others. It is also selfish to not allow somebody else to release their potential by blessing you with their God-given gifts or partnering with you. Imagine that you are an arm in the body of Christ, and you decide to be amputated. Now the fingers can't fully fulfill their potential either, because you were both designed to be teammates.

Isolation is foolish because it wastes your potential instead of allowing it to serve others. How can God say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant" when you hide your talents by hiding from people (see Matthew 25:23)? It is foolish to isolate yourself, because it makes you an easy target for Satan. In fact, the Apostle Paul referred to removing a person from the fellowship of believers as a means of handing someone over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5).

In the Kingdom, we enjoy empowering relationships and share God's love in the context of community. **We know how to bless others by sharing our wisdom and our abilities, and we give others the opportunity to bless us by allowing them to share their wisdom and abilities.** Kingdom culture enjoys teamwork and helping each person to fulfill their unique calling. We place ourselves under the covering of a local church and the accountability of spiritual leaders.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account (Hebrews 13:17 ESV).

... Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Hebrews 10:25).

### 15. *Rebellion*

Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not contend with man forever” ... The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain (Genesis 6:3, 5-6)

By Genesis 6, people so stubbornly resisted God that He regrets the fact that He created them. They had so abused their conscience that it went *out of order*. Our desires are magnets, and what we are obsessed with, we will soon be possessed by. These people attracted more and more wickedness because that was what they wanted. They obsessed over wickedness and thus, became possessed by wickedness.

The rebellious spirit grieves the heart of God because God knows rebellion will only bring bondage instead of true freedom. Kingdom people bring pleasure to God through the thoughts and intents of their hearts. They have a good, healthy conscience and desire Kingdom culture, continually attracting it and being possessed by it. They are truly free to enjoy God’s best for their lives.

Kingdom cultured people know how to submit to authority as well. Although we are all equally valuable in the Kingdom, there is rank in the Kingdom. We are called to submit to our spiritual leaders and even those who are over us in government and in the workplace (Of course as long as what they are telling you to do doesn’t violate Kingdom principles.)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have

to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17).

**It's unwise to trust anybody who doesn't have good history with a spiritual father or mother.** Watch out for ministries that were born out of rebellion. Beware of those with a history of church splitting and/or a reputation of dishonoring pastors. Before you are going to come under somebody's ministry, check who their spiritual fathers and mothers are. I'm not talking about who their peers are, I'm not talking about whose books they read and sermons they listen to, but who are their relational spiritual fathers and/or mothers? Have they faithfully served anybody's ministry? (*See my book Step Into Destiny.*) Will their spiritual father vouch for their character and ministry or raise red flags? If they are fatherless, beware. It's a sign of rebelliousness. The rebellious spirit also reproduces itself like a cancer cell.

Do not remove an ancient landmark or *enter the fields of the fatherless*" (Proverbs 23:10)

I served a man of God named Ryan Lee for eight years before being commissioned by this man to start my church and ministry. This is one of the greatest credentials to my ministry. My eight years of serving as an Associate Pastor is much weightier than my seminary degree. Being commissioned by this credible man of God and him vouching for me says more about my ministry than the number of books I've written. It takes humility, faithfulness, dedication, honor, and love to submit to somebody else- but this is Kingdom culture.

## **16. Drunkenness**

He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent (Genesis 9:21 ESV).

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I believe that Noah got drunk because he didn't know how to deal with the misery of boredom. He no longer had a focused vision for his life, and therefore began drinking away. Neither boredom nor drunkenness is of the Kingdom. **In the Kingdom, we live excited and sober.** Living excited is Kingdom culture because our God is the God of all hope (see Romans 15:13). God loves it when His people are excited about life! A number of worldly people find their excitement from using substances such as drugs and alcohol, but that is an extremely low level of excitement; it does not begin to compare to drinking in God and how it feels to be full of His Spirit. God wants us to be high on Him and high on life, not on some fermented grape juice.

Laziness, passivity, apathy, and inability to dream big are symptoms of somebody who has been affected by the spirit of this world. Kingdom people are not okay with being unproductive and living a life of low-impact. We live everyday with productivity, energy, and passion, and we run on the fuel of a vision and mission from God. We don't waste time being bored; we invest our time into fulfilling our God-given purpose.

Noah allowed a grape to take dominion over him, but it is we, who are to have dominion over the earth. Drug, alcohol, and food addicts are under the spirit of this world; they allow plants, barley, and animals to dominate them. Kingdom people dominate the earth, and since our bodies are also dirt, we must take dominion over it, too.

### **17. Dishonor.**

Noah's son, Ham, exposed his father's nakedness, dishonoring him. Disagreeing is okay, but dishonoring isn't. If you don't honor your parents, your heart will become conditioned to dishonor, and you will have a hard time respecting anyone else. With a dishonoring heart, you

will not be able to live a blessed life. Kingdom people understand and give honor. Honor is an attitude of heart that values and loves people. Honor causes us to see the greatness in each person and treat them with sincere respect. **As we give honor to all people, honor gives us access into greater blessings.**

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12 ESV).

Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor (1 Peter 2:17 ESV).

## **18. Self-Ambition.**

Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4 ESV).

By Genesis 11, the people are working to erect the Tower of Babel in order to “make a name for themselves.” This group of people is not the lazy, going nowhere type; they have a vision, but it is born from self-ambition. **Selfish ambition wants to achieve something significant without intimate partnership with God.** If you leave God out of your endeavors, you are moved by self-ambition. Therefore, self-ambitious people usually don’t have a prayer life; they are too busy to really spend time in prayer. Whenever we lose our prayer lives in order to pursue something, we know we are very much in danger of crossing into selfish ambition. It’s not wrong to be driven, but when there is no partnership with God, it will not flourish forever. Sooner or later, that ambition will

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be crushed, just as God destroyed the Tower of Babel. Only what is done in love, in partnership with God, has eternal value; it will remain forever in our account, and everything else will be destroyed. Stay connected to God's heart and live from that place of love and selflessness – this is Kingdom culture. Let His compassion be your ambition and you will have great rewards!

Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done (1 Corinthians 3:13 ESV).

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died (2 Corinthians 5:14 ESV).

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3 ESV).

### Discussion Questions:

- What impacted you the most from this chapter?
- Who are you submitted to? Do you have a relational and credible spiritual father and/or mother?
- What does it really look like to honor all people?





# **PART 3**

*Kingdom Culture*  
*vs.*  
*Religious Culture*



# 13

## *Don't Give Them Religion*

**I**'ll never forget the day I first met Dr. Myles Munroe at the altar of a church in Whittier, California. I was introduced to him as a youth pastor, and the first thing he said to me was, **“Don't give the young people religion, teach them the Kingdom.”** Those words from his heart caused my heart to erupt! My spirit literally leaped within me. I knew that I had just heard from God through a man I had long respected. Although I recognized that God was clearly speaking to me in that divine moment, there was a problem: I didn't quite know the difference between religion and the Kingdom.

This set me on a fervent study of the Scriptures, and since then, it's been my earnest desire and prayer to understand the distinction between the Kingdom and religion. The more I studied, prayed, and meditated on the subject, the more convinced I became that **the greatest enemy of the Kingdom is actually religion.** In the last section, we studied the differences between the world's culture and Kingdom culture. Yet, I believe that the greater enemy to Kingdom culture is the religious culture. Those who gave Jesus the hardest time were not worldly sinners, but religious folk.

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This section of the book is designed to uproot religious mindsets, which have kept you from enjoying the Kingdom of God. It's the Father's pleasure to give you the *Kingdom*, not religion (see Luke 12:32). As those weeds of religion are pulled out, you will see the garden of the Kingdom flourish in your life. Soon, all those around you will have a cultural experience of the Kingdom of God, not an experience with a man-made religion.

### *Right Questions, Wrong Conclusions*

Many sincere Christians recognize that there is something missing in their religious Christianity so they are searching for something more, even something else. If the Spirit of God dwells in them, they know that something is wrong with their powerless and loveless religion, and they wonder why their churches look so different from the ministry of Jesus Christ and the early church.

They're asking the right questions, but some have turned to the wrong answers. Some have turned to a false, licentious doctrine of grace, which Jude warned against, saying, "They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality..." (Jude 1:4 NIV). Others have embraced a new-age form of spirituality and profess that they are *through* with organized, classic religion. Sadly, they are just jumping from one *imitation* to another, dancing from error to error. **What they are all really searching for is Kingdom living, the very life we are made for.**

### *Starving for the Kingdom*

A hungry man will eat almost anything. In times past, some have even turned to cannibalism for survival. Recently, in one particular poverty-stricken country, the people made cookies out of dirt to satisfy their ravenous hunger. Ever since the Fall of Mankind from our original state,

the human spirit has cried out for the very thing they lost: the Kingdom of God. In fact, all creation, which includes humans, cries out for the manifestation of the Kingdom of God (see Romans 8:19). Humans may not be *consciously* aware of their need for the Kingdom, but deep in their spirit, they long for it. Jesus described the Kingdom as a merchant searching for pearls, and when he finds *the* pearl, he is willing to give up everything for it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant *in search* of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matthew 13:45-46 ESV).

Notice how he was *searching* for something, for pearls. When he found one pearl of such value, he was willing to give up everything he had, just to enjoy that pearl.

Humanity is searching for the Kingdom of God, and when we find it, we immediately begin to see that there is nothing more valuable than living the Kingdom life so we give up our inferior mindsets and lifestyles. **When you find the Kingdom, you will drop the worldly and religious ways of living.**

Sadly, many have not yet found the Kingdom of God. They are searching, and their souls scream for the Kingdom life that they were made for. Just as desperate humans resort to eating *strange* things when “real food” is nowhere to be found, the human heart has consumed a *strange* thing called *religion* because they could not find the Kingdom. Religion is like a dirt cookie. God created us for Kingdom culture, not religion.

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34 ESV).

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When our cat moved into our home, he had a vicious appetite for our fake plants. It baffled us. We had to put all the fake plants up on a high cabinet, and he still climbed his way up to them, breaking some of our shelves along the way (Since he's overweight too). So, I decided to go to the store and buy him some pet grass. When our cat began to eat real, organic grass, he lost interest in the plastic plants. **When you experience the Kingdom of God and begin to digest its perfect culture, there will be no more fascination with plastic forms of spirituality.** You will know that the Kingdom is the prize; your search will be over, and you will give up all the fake stuff because you have experienced what you were made for: Kingdom culture.

Why is religion so popular? Even when some predicted that religion would become irrelevant after scientific advances, that has not been the case. Religion is a multi-trillion dollar business and a force that every nation needs to reckon with.

While many are part of organized religions, those who have been fed up with traditional religion have chosen to practice other forms of trans-denominational spirituality, insisting that they are not religious, just spiritual. Nevertheless, all man-made forms of religion and spirituality are a desperate response to the Kingdom-shaped hole within every person. Jesus explained that when somebody finds the Kingdom, they experience such fulfillment and joy that they are willing to exchange *everything* for the Kingdom, which is easy to believe, because nothing but Kingdom culture satisfies the human heart.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field (Matthew 13:44).

## *Religion and Kingdom: A Culture Clash*

Religion is the greatest opposition to the Kingdom because it deceives some to think they found what they were searching for. They think they have the Kingdom, when they don't. Religion is like counterfeit money and those who have been collecting it for years think they are rich, when they really aren't. Jesus made it clear that in order to receive the Kingdom, we would have to be desperate for it. Yet, religious people aren't desperate for Kingdom life. They remain void of Kingdom culture because they are so full of religious culture. Why do people stay religious?

- They don't know about Kingdom culture.
- They find their worth in their religiosity.
- Practicing religion has become their entertainment of choice.
- Religion has become a big source of revenue and prestige.

I was under a strong religious spirit for a number of years, and I did not know how to get free. **Religious culture and Kingdom culture are incompatible, and you end up very sick when you try to fuse the two together.** Because I had a mixture of cultures, I was a very unhealthy Christian. Those who really knew me were not able to see a clear picture of the Kingdom. Yet, as I started learning the differences between Kingdom and religion, I realized I was too skilled in religious culture and too underdeveloped in Kingdom culture. This was a serious wake-up call and created a deep desperation in me. I became poor in spirit, realizing that my counterfeit bills of religion were worth nothing. That desperation set me up for a cultural revolution, from religion to the Kingdom.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3 ESV).

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Some religious people think they are spiritually elite because of how zealous they are; yet, they don't know that they are deprived of what they really need: the Kingdom. This is why Jesus spent more time speaking against the Pharisees than the prostitutes, not because Jesus condones prostitution, but because Pharisaism or religiosity was and is the greatest hindrance to Kingdom living. **Religion is a placebo; it's fake medicine, which has no power to heal you but works to make you think that you are fine now.** You can become so dependent on the placebo that you miss out on the real medicine that can heal you. This is why religion is so dangerous; it keeps you from reaching out to the Kingdom.

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in (Matthew 23:13 ESV).

### Discussion Questions:

- Why do we crave Kingdom culture?
- How come people who have grown up in religious circles can end up jumping from one error to another?
- Explain why you need to come to a point of desperation in order to exchange religious living for Kingdom living?



# 14

## *Religious Culture is a Perversion*

**M**any products come with a manufacturer's warranty so that if something goes wrong, you can reconnect with the manufacturer; nobody knows a product like the manufacturer. Let's say your computer has a problem. If it's an Apple computer you need to take it back to Apple, not to Dell. To get help from the manufacturer, you need to speak to an authorized representative. Only the manufacturer can restore your computer, because only the manufacturer can replace the broken parts with the original parts. If you go to an unauthorized dealer, they can pretend to have the answers and give you some replacement parts, but they can only guess at solutions to your problems and give you a temporary fix, at best. **Religion and other forms of spirituality are mere guesswork, and the parts they offer may help temporarily, but they aren't the original design.** You must connect with your Manufacturer through His Authorized Representative, Jesus Christ, if you want to have what you lost restored: the Kingdom.

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

Religion is a perversion of the Kingdom; it's not the right version. You might be asking, "Isn't Christianity a religion?" *Historically*, yes, but

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*originally*, no. Let me explain. Historically, the religion of Christianity went through the Dark Ages and led Crusades. The religious Christian church killed Muslims and Jews while waving the cross, thinking they were advancing the Kingdom of God. During the middle ages, the religious Christian church was contaminated with corruption and sold forgiveness to their ignorant members, who did not even have their own Bibles to read. But don't be mistaken- the *Kingdom* never went through the Dark Ages, for the religious Christian church is not God's culture. Although the crusaders believed they were fighting for the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom was nowhere in their religiously motivated conquests.

### *Christianity Goes Religious*

When the Roman Emperor, Constantine, took leadership of the church, declaring himself the Pontifex Maximus, a pagan title reserved for the high priest, he inserted many pagan practices and beliefs into the church and deleted Jesus' emphasis on the Kingdom of God. Constantine did not want any emphasis on a separate Kingdom, and therefore he made sure there was no talk about the Kingdom of God in the Nicene Creed, which has been the backbone of Christian theology since the fourth century. Instead, Constantine declared that his Roman-Catholic church was the kingdom of God. Therefore, Constantine interpreted the growth of His church as the advancement of God's kingdom. This perverted thinking was passed down and helped justify the religious crusades against Muslims, Jews, and others. They saw converting by force and fear to be an effective means of expanding God's kingdom. This is so very twisted! Violence appeared on earth after the Fall; it's part of the world's culture. Violent people are worldly people, not Kingdom people. The Kingdom of God expands through meekness and gentleness, not violence.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth  
(Matthew 5:5 ESV).

## *Religious Culture is a Perversion*

Constantine was not the founder of Christianity; he was the polluter of it. He was a murderer who had his own wife and son killed. The true founder of Christianity laid down His life for all of humanity. But Jesus didn't come to be the founder of another religion; His message and mission was always about His Father's Kingdom.

Tragically, many confused Christians live more of a religious life than a Kingdom life. They think they have the real thing, but they are chewing on the counterfeit. Jesus wanted His followers to live in His Kingdom, not to create another religious institution. **In His love and compassion, He knew what humanity truly needed; we needed the Kingdom, not religion.**

If you are a religious person, people meet religion when they meet you. If you are a Kingdom person, people experience the Kingdom when they meet you. It's my deep desire that people will not experience religion in our churches, but the real, vibrant, irresistible life of Kingdom culture – the only thing that can truly satisfy.

Many people I meet stay away from organized religion for various reasons, and some of those reasons are valid. Although they profess belief in God, they don't want to come under the hypocrisy, control, selfishness, and manipulation they've seen in the religious institutions. Jesus has good news for them! He's saying, "I don't want to be part of those groups either!" Jesus is not in religious Christianity; He's the King of the Kingdom, but religious Christianity refuses to let Jesus reign. They may sing about Him, but they don't submerge into His culture. **If you choose religious Christianity, you will miss Jesus.**

## *Religion has a Fatal End*

Because every religion is man-made, it will not endure forever. The Father did not plant religion so it will be eventually uprooted.

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Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots (Matthew 15:13 NIV).

Those who have banked their lives on religion will be in for the rudest awakening. The religious may do many works for God, but they are not aligned with God's heart. Cain worked hard to present his sacrifice to God, but since it was not aligned with God's heart, it was rejected despite Cain's sincerity. One of the most sobering passages in the Bible is when Jesus warns that not everyone who claims that He is their Lord will inherit the Kingdom, despite all their zealous works and sincerity. Religious Christians are usually hard workers, but their lives aren't aligned to His will, which means they are not of the Kingdom's culture. To reject Kingdom culture means you are a worker of lawlessness, and that is a dangerous road to take.

On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matthew 7:22-23 ESV).

During Noah's day, only those in the Ark were saved. No other boat or raft concocted by man made it through the flood. The Ark represents the Kingdom; it had heavenly blueprints and was not the result of human ideas. Therefore, it was able to truly save those who entered it. Every manmade boat of religion or spirituality will be destroyed; only the boat of the Kingdom will endure.

Jesus warned that the enemy would come to sabotage the influence of the Kingdom through the planting of religion:

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

— Matthew 13:24-30 NIV

**Over time, you can tell if a person lives a Kingdom life or a religious life; their true colors will show.** The Kingdom Christian will display the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)<sup>2</sup>. Religious Christians will be full of the spirit of this world, which they will not be able to hide for long. Jesus said of the false prophets, “You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles” (Matthew 7:16 ESV)?

**Just as a plastic tree cannot bear real, organic fruit, religious Christianity cannot bear the real Kingdom fruit.** Kingdom citizens will be brought into heaven but the religious won’t be. This is serious business; eternal destinations are at stake. When I say “religious

<sup>2</sup> I’m not saying that we will automatically be living perfect, I understand that it’s a process, but Kingdom Christians will be in that process. The Father will lovingly discipline His kids into maturity (Hebrews 12:6-7).

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Christians,” I’m not talking about those who are born again yet have some religious strongholds in their minds. When I say religious Christians, I’m speaking of those who aren’t born again, and they don’t have the Holy Spirit living inside of them, yet they are deceived into thinking that they are such good Christians. For the true Kingdom citizen who is struggling with religious mindsets because of an un-renewed mind, the Lord will continue to work with us and continue to prune us of our faulty mindsets. But the religious person’s story will end in tragedy! This is why we need to start living Kingdom lives, so that through our witness, the religious will see that their way of living is not the right way, and they will come to be truly born-again into the Kingdom culture.

### *The Unending Move of God*

While many fads come and go in the Christian world, the Kingdom of God is the unending move of God. When the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, had a dream, he saw a beautiful, man-made statute overpowered and demolished by a rock that was not man-made. Daniel interpreted this prophetic dream, explaining that the statue represented the kingdoms of this world while the stone presented the Kingdom of God.

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. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces (Daniel 2:44-45 NIV).

It was prophesied of Jesus, “He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:33 ESV). **The Kingdom of God is not *A* move of God; it is *THE* move of God, which will not end.** The Kingdom is not a fad; it’s God’s original plan for man, which was lost through Adam and restored through Christ. Jesus spent His last forty days on earth teaching about the Kingdom (see Acts 1:3). Paul spent his last days teaching about the Kingdom (see Acts 28:31). The Kingdom of God is not a side-dish; it’s the entire buffet. You can’t beat the Kingdom, so join it!

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Have you ever met somebody who claimed to be a Christian but was hyper religious and void of the fruit of the Spirit?
- How come Jesus is not in religious Christianity?
- Explain why the Kingdom of God is not a side-dish, but the entire buffet.





# 15

## *Intellectualism, Judgmentalism, and Legalism*

**W**hen Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in order to be like God, he was tempting them with *religion*. **The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is a picture of religion.** Remember, the forbidden tree was not the tree of Satanism, but the knowledge of good and evil.

- It didn't appear *obviously* evil and neither does religion.
- Satan promised greater godliness, and so does religion.
- However, just as that tree brought death, so, too, does religion.

The Tree of Life, on the other hand, is a picture of the Kingdom of God. You must choose which tree you will feast on. The three common fruits of religion are intellectualism, judgmentalism, and legalism.

### **1. Intellectualism vs. Intimacy with the Spirit**

Adam and Eve eating from the knowledge of the tree of good and evil rather than the Tree of Life was a picture of exalting *knowledge* over *life*. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is a picture of mere head

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knowledge (the dryness of intellectualism), while the Tree of Life is a picture of the work of the Spirit (the vibrant life of the Spirit).

I'm not saying that there is not a proper place for education. Increase in knowledge is an ingredient to victorious living. The book of Proverbs teaches that "a man of knowledge enhances his might..." (Proverbs 24:5) We should do what we can to grow in knowledge. Yet we mustn't let our relationship with God become reduced to the accumulation of information, rather than spirit-to-Spirit communication. There is a difference.

An intellectual pastor with a teaching gift can teach on a theological topic to his congregation, but end up just feeding their heads, not their hearts. Informative teaching can still leave a congregation dry, crusty, and religious. Yet, a pastor who has intimacy with the Holy Spirit will speak with the power and love of God so the people will receive more than just information, but an *impartation* from the Spirit of Life. However, let me say that this is not just the pastor's job. We must all be walking with *life-giving revelation from the Spirit*. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:33). Jesus had more than information to teach, He imparted life-giving revelation from the Spirit because He intimately knew the Spirit. This is how we do it in the Kingdom.

Intellectualism will try to replace intimacy, but it's a cheap imitation. Education will try to replace encounters, but it can't. Facts will try to replace fellowship with God, but it's impossible. **Religion will try to keep you satisfied with an academic knowledge of a God you never experience.** Don't settle for a cerebral exercise when you can have *life-giving intimacy* with God. When you are hungrier for factual knowledge than being in intimate fellowship with God, you are on your way to religiosity.

## **2. Judging vs. Loving**

When Adam and Eve ate from the source of knowledge of good and evil over the Tree of Life, this signified the exaltation of *judgment* over *love*. The Tree of Life symbolizes love – there is nothing more life giving than love – while the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil symbolizes being judgmental. You can't eat from two trees at the same time. When you judge people, you are not loving them. Adam and Eve ate of that tree and found nourishment from it. You, too, commit the original sin if you find your identity, worth, and energy from pointing out the evil in other people and judging them. Remember, your knowledge apart from love is worth nothing (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-3). **Religious people are known for their judgmentalism, Kingdom people are known for their love.** There is a reason why sinners flocked to Jesus and wanted to be His friend (see Matthew 11:19). When they were around Him they felt love, not judgment.

As soon as Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree, they started judging one another. When you start feasting on religion, you will become judgmental. During my religious days, I was very loveless and judgmental. Thus, I ended up hurting people instead of helping them. As I was hurting others, I was hurting myself. When we choose judgment over love, we destroy others and ourselves.

## *Pride Plays God*

Judge not, that you be not judged (Matthew 7:1 ESV).

Remember, Satan tempted them saying that with the digestion of that fruit, they will become like God. Religion will tempt you to take the place of God by being judgmental. God is the ultimate Judge- that position is reserved solely for Him. God is the final judge of a person's character

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and motives, and when we think we are qualified for that position, we are trying to play God.

When we have labeled people as good or evil and interpret all of their actions according to that label, we are judging them. Satan seeks to make you misjudge people's motives. He successfully got Adam and Eve to doubt God's motives for keeping the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil forbidden. I remember when I labeled somebody as being selfish and egotistical; every time he did something nice for somebody, I'd think, "He's just trying to show off; He's just trying to win a popularity contest; He just wants to suck up so he can make more money, etc." Based upon my assumptions of his character, I judged his motives. But were my *assumptions* correct? Only God really knows, but because I didn't like him, I labeled him, and I judged him according to that label.

As Kingdom citizens, we are in the business of loving people and believing the best about them (1 Corinthians 13:7). And even though we find out that they have issues, we must still hope the best for them, pray for them, and not label them.

We also cannot freeze people in the past, based on a mistake we know about them. Just because they made a mistake, doesn't mean that their character is fixed in evil. Just because a tree had one bad fruit, doesn't mean it's a bad tree. Jesus didn't throw Peter out because he had some occasional bad fruit. Some of us write someone off based on a few bad decisions we think they made and we misinterpret their character and give them no room to change. I know I'm not the same person I used to be. The Lord has done, and continues to do, a great work in me. For somebody to think I'm still where I was a year ago is misjudging me.

I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience

is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God (1 Corinthians 4:3-5 NIV).

### *Pride Goes Before the Fall*

Have you ever condemned somebody for a weakness, only to see that weakness flare up in your own life? Have you ever lovelessly spoken negatively about somebody because of a character flaw, only to find that flawed characteristic showing up in your own life? Have you ever judged somebody for being a certain way, only to become that way yourself? If we proudly judge others, it will bring judgment upon our selves. When we start judging others with a heart of pride, the protective grace of God begins to lift from our own lives. Therefore, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18 NIV).

It astonishes me how many people make arrogant vows that they would never do something, only to do the very thing they vowed never to do. Peter vowed that he would never deny Jesus. Peter saw himself better than the other disciples, and therefore said, "Even though they all fall away, I will not" (Mark 14:29 ESV). It's dangerous ground to think you are better than others and immune to their weaknesses. We must remain dependent upon the grace of God.

### *What about Being Discerning?*

Adam and Eve were allowed to look on the tree and even inspect it. I believe we are to see and discern what's good and evil, but we are not

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to get our identity from our ability to discern. Insecure people feast on their knowledge of another person's weaknesses in order to find personal security. They will devour others with their judgmental words and feel a strange satisfaction. That's sick. If they would feast on love, they would have no desire to devour people with judgment.

Discernment is a gift of the Spirit, and there is certainly a place for it. But *all* the gifts must flow with the greatest gift: Love. Yes, we need to watch for false teachers, but our motive for discerning must be love, nothing more or less. Are we to discern what's right and wrong in people's lives? Yes. But how are we to help others if we merely judge them from a loveless heart?

When Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman at the well (See John 4), He knew all about her. He knew her shameful history to the details. Yet, His knowledge of her didn't stop His love for her. He kindly shared with her the knowledge He had of her past and even present sin. Even then, she felt loved in His presence, and her life was transformed by this encounter with Jesus. She started telling her whole town about the Lord. This is the power of being discerning and loving.

What's the difference between judgment and discernment? It boils down to the heart. Do you exalt judgment over love? Do we exalt our knowledge of somebody's good or evil over love? If you love people less because of new knowledge about them, you have elevated judgment over love. Let's leave judgment to God and focus on loving people- whether they are lovable or not. You don't have to trust everyone, but you *are* required to love. Jesus didn't trust everyone (see John 2:24), but He did love everyone.

In the Kingdom, we love imperfect people not because they deserve it, but because we are cultured in God's love, which surpasses knowledge. Jesus modeled this perfectly for us, because through His ability to discern

people's hearts and motives, He very well knew of Judas' deceptive heart toward Him and that Judas would soon betray Him for thirty pieces of silver- yet, Jesus loved him freely!

To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19 ESV).

Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13b ESV)!

**Love is the beverage that helps us digest the knowledge we eat.** Without love, knowledge will not digest too well- it will lead to intellectualism and judgmentalism. If you receive more and more knowledge, but you have less and less love, you will become just an intellectual and judgmental person. With the increase of knowledge, must come the increase of love for God and people.

A loving, compassionate person will never become proud and arrogant, despite their acceleration in wisdom and knowledge. We will always grow in knowledge, so don't let it overtake your love. Keep growing in love.

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (1 Corinthians 8:1).

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment (Philippians 1:9 ESV).

### ***3. Legalism vs. A Love Relationship***

Eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was also a picture of exalting morals and ethics over the person of Jesus, who *is*

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the Tree of Life. We need to find our *life* in Christ (see Colossians 3:3). Kingdom citizens must not try to find *life* in morality and ethics. This is why Paul had to rebuke the Galatians; they were trusting in some things other than Christ for their salvation and *identity* (see Galatians 2-3). Yes, moral living is important, but our value is found in how perfectly loved we are in Christ.

The legalist work *for* God's love, but Kingdom people work *from* God's love. The legalistic and religious will boast in their works, but Kingdom Christians who live *from* God's love will never boast- for God's love is not proud and does not boast (see 1 Corinthians 13:4). Rather, if we have found our identity in God's grace, like Paul, we will say, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me..." (1 Corinthians 15:10). When you find your identity in God's grace, you will work hard for the Lord, but you will boast in His grace, since you depended upon His grace. This is Kingdom culture. God's grace that is given to us in Christ is what motivates us and energizes us. We find our continual strength from our personal relationship with Christ, not our moral track record.

Ethics are important! But ethics without love is not true holiness or godliness; it's legalism. **Religion exalts ethics over love.** The Pharisees were zealous about following the laws in the Scripture, such as tithing, but they did not have a love for God or people (see Mark 7:6, Matthew 23:23). Thus, they were legalistic.

When we try to find *life* from morality rather than personal relationship with Jesus, we become legalistic. Many people are motivated by their sense of morality, even unbelievers. But in the Kingdom, we are energized by the *love of Christ* to be ethical and moral. Paul said, "The love of Christ compels us..." (see 2 Corinthians 5:14). Religious people say, "I have to do this because it's the right thing to do." Kingdom



people say, “I’d love to do this because I’m in love with God and His love overflows from my heart!” Do you see the difference?

Jesus said “my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30). In the Kingdom, obeying the rules is not a painful burden, but a joyful delight- all because of His love. As Kingdom people, we have become one with God’s heart through intimacy with Him, loving what He loves and hating what He hates. Our goal is not to become a legalistic, joyless robot, programmed by moral codes. That is religion’s goal. **Religion wants to program you with laws, Jesus wants to possess you with His love.**

I’m not saying that we don’t enjoy learning the laws of the Kingdom; We ought to diligently study the constitution of our Kingdom- the Word of God. The religious pharisees studied the Word of God, but their study didn’t lead them into greater intimacy with Jesus Christ, but became an idol. The Scriptures are to be a *doorway* into greater intimacy with God, not a monument that we admire and worship. Jesus said to the pharisees, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39).

Jesus is to be the One who sets our hearts on fire, not a rule-book. It’s our love for Jesus that compels us to follow His laws- the cultural standards of the Kingdom. The heart of Kingdom living is a love relationship with the King. When your primary pursuit is this love relationship, you will become moral and ethical. But when your primary pursuit is morality and ethics, you will miss out on this love relationship! **Religious people worship holiness; Kingdom people worship the Holy One.**

The church in Ephesus zealously tried to live according to the rules, and Jesus praised them for their dedication (see Revelation 2:2-3,6), but He also implied that they missed something weightier – love.

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But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first (Revelation 2:4 ESV).

The church in Ephesus were so consumed with holiness, ethics, morality, but they forgot what Kingdom living was all about- a love relationship with Jesus that overflows into divine love for people. Legalistic and religious people may try to practice love, but they never become the manifestation of love. In Kingdom culture, love is to be more than a verb; it's a *person*. God is love (1 John 4:8). He doesn't just try to act loving, He *is* love! When we are intimate with Jesus, we become a loving *person*. True godliness is becoming love (noun), not just trying to act loving (verb). When you are love (noun) you will do love (verb). But, when you try to do love (verb) without being love (noun), you are missing the Kingdom life; **Kingdom living is becoming love incarnate through a personal relationship with the King.**

And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." (Mark 12:32-34)

### Discussion Questions:

- Why do we need more than head knowledge to live the Kingdom life?
- What does it mean to have love that surpasses knowledge?
- What happens when we elevate ethics above a vibrant love relationship with Jesus?

# 16

## *Religion vs. Kingdom*

**O**ne of the strongest prototypes of religion is a man named Cain. Jesus referred to the spirit that Cain possessed as the same spirit that was operating in the religious leaders of His day (see Matthew 23:35). As we've seen, the *religious spirit* is not a new phenomenon but has been in operation since the fall. In the next two chapters, we will use Cain's life to further understand the difference between religion and the Kingdom, because **while Cain is a picture of religion, Abel is a picture of the Kingdom.**

Cain was the son of Adam and Eve, who had a real zeal for God and sincerely wanted to please Him. But, Cain's problem was that he was trying to serve a God that he refused to submit to. This way of living is extremely counterproductive. **The religious are zealous, but their zeal is often counterproductive.** Religious people often act like dogs chasing their own tail; They are in passionate pursuit to please God, but they never arrive at their desired destination.

*Zeal - Kingdom Culture = Religion*

Cain chose to believe that God enjoyed hard-earned veggies, when God did not. God demanded a blood sacrifice as the only way to be

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accepted by Him. Cain should have learned this from hearing how God covered his parents with the blood and skins of an innocent lamb (see Genesis 3:21). After Adam and Eve sinned against God, they tried to cover themselves up with fig leaves. But God was not okay with their religious fig-leaf outfits so, to cover them, He killed an innocent animal, shedding its blood. In this, God clearly revealed His will, His economy, and *His culture*, which declares that in order to properly draw near to God, there must be a blood sacrifice. Until Jesus' blood was shed on the cross as our ultimate sacrifice, everyone had to connect with God through offering a blood sacrifice. This explains why the Old Testament is such a bloody book with over 400 references to blood. Adam and Eve passed this important principle to their sons, and while Abel embraced God's culture and offered a blood sacrifice, Cain rejected it.

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22 ESV).

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life (Leviticus 17:14 NIV).

I tell people not to marry someone just because that person has a zeal for God. Osama Bin Laden had passion for his deity. Just because somebody is zealous for God does not mean that they are living a Kingdom life. **You need more than passion; you need passion joined with Kingdom culture.** As long as we refuse God's culture, we are just being religious. Paul wrote about the religious Jews, saying, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2 ESV). They were full of passion, but empty of revelation and thus, unable to live out God's will for their lives.

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Let's say you have a real desire for God, so you pray for eight-hours a day, fast three-days a week, study the Bible until your eyes got shot red, and witness on the streets until you lose your voice. But if you are holding onto unforgiveness and bitterness, you have rejected God's culture and you are just being religious. Do you see how important it is to embrace God's culture? Jesus told the religious people, "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'" (Matthew 9:13 ESV). The Pharisees zealously sacrificed for God, but they missed His culture of mercy.

**Kingdom Christians are marked by a zeal for God, but this zeal comes from intimately knowing God's heart- which is His culture.** Don't just have a passion for God, *experience who* He is and allow it to be manifested through you.

## *Religion is Frustrating*

Deep inside, religious people are frustrated with their relationship with God. Cain's relationship with God was *frustrating* to say the least. He saw Abel get blessed, but he did not receive God's blessing. **God will not change for us, and if we don't change for Him, we will have to go without His blessings.** If your relationship with God is frustrating and not blessed, it could be that you are not aligned with Kingdom culture.

Due to this frustration and discontent, many religious people secretly seek satisfaction from the pleasures of this world. They need to fill their void somehow. Religious people tend to indulge in fleshly gratifications behind the scenes, even if it's in opposition to what they stand for. Osama Bin Laden had a wealth of western pornography and Coca-Cola in his compounds, which leaves us to question the consistency of his hatred for America.

### *Religion Wears Masks*

This fiery preacher's voice was heard around the world through the airwaves. Countless numbers of followers faithfully watched their favorite preacher on their television sets and sent him generous financial support. This man had one of the largest ministries the world had ever seen. His followers savored his no-nonsense approach toward sin, for he would attack sin with a vengeance from his pulpit. He also had a habit of speaking against other ministers regarding their character flaws. Then, he was exposed. Photos of him visiting prostitutes were captured and this dynamic preacher's mega-church and international following were devastated.

Religious Christians aren't shy about preaching against sin, and they have no hesitation when it comes to cutting other people down, but they often live double lives. Religious hypocrisy is nothing new. In the early church, Ananias and Sapphira pretended to give away all the money from the land they sold (see Acts 5). They wanted to put on a good show, but they secretly held funds back, not expecting to get caught. To their astonishment, they were exposed for who they were- hypocrites. Although religious people put on a show, they aren't willing to give up everything for it; they will keep secrets in their back pocket. **Religion is not worth giving up everything for, but the Kingdom is.**

While Cain *appeared* to be a sold-out worshipper of God, inside he was full of jealousy and bitterness. Religious Christians might use their zeal for God as their mask, but underneath it all, they are full of the spirit of this world (see Part 2). When you get past their religious exterior and investigate the culture of their heart, it's no different than the world and sometimes even worse. Without coincidence, Satan, too, likes to dress up as an angel of light (see 2 Corinthians 11:14), clean on the outside

but nasty on the inside. Those steeped in religion have the devil's nature, which led to Jesus calling the religious leaders "children of the devil" (see John 8:44).

Jesus told the Pharisees, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15 ESV). The Pharisees didn't care about who they were in the sight of God; they worked tirelessly to persuade people that they were holy, but their hearts were an abomination to God. We can fool people, but we can't fool God. Are you more concerned about your reputation before people or your heart before God?

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness (Matthew 23:25-28 ).

Contrarily, **Kingdom Christians understand that although people see our outside, God sees our heart** (see 1 Samuel 16:7). We long for the Lord to change us from the inside out, and we cooperate with Him in this quest for a right heart. Jesus came to promote Kingdom life, not religious life. Therefore, He addressed the importance of not just doing the right things *externally*, but having the right heart *internally*.

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You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.” But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.... You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28 ESV).

Contrary to religious thought, God doesn’t want a holy city or building, but a holy heart. Jesus never wanted the Kingdom to be a limited geographical location, but a dwelling within the hearts of His people.

Nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21).

The Kingdom is all about the heart, and it transforms our heart so that we reflect the nature of our Father from the inside-out. God wants our hearts to be Kingdom embassies, so when people get to see our hearts they will have a cultural experience with heaven.

### *Religion is Joyless*

A very well known humanitarian, also known for being one of the world’s most compassionate people, wrote letters that revealed she was tormented by depression for most of her life and service. She had more than a dark night of the soul. The feeling that God had abandoned her tormented her, continually. Although she zealously served God and did the best she could to help humanity, she was not enjoying the Kingdom life, which is joy in the Holy Spirit (see Romans 14:17). Religious mindsets left her frustrated and miserable.



Religious Cain did not know joy. His countenance was painted with stress. While he knew how to strive for God, he did not know how to delight in God. **Religion doesn't know how to enjoy God or life.** I remember a time when it was very difficult for me to enjoy life, because I was under a religious spirit. My relationship with God was stressful because I felt like I was never good enough for Him, and I believed that His presence was difficult to access.

Religious people carry a spirit of heaviness, burdened by the sense of unworthiness and hopelessness. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders saying, “Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers” (Luke 11:46 ESV). Religion is burdensome and unable to empower you to gracefully meet its constant demands.

The Pharisees were not the happiest bunch; they would fast often and look purposefully miserable (see Matthew 6:16). They communicated the false message that living holy means living miserably. Don't be fooled! The holy life of a Kingdom citizen looks like joy! The joy of the Lord energizes our holy living (Nehemiah 8:10). While fear and depression represent religion, joy represents the Kingdom. Our heavenly Father is most pleased with us when we are most pleased with Him. **Joy is the proof that you are enjoying the presence of God, not religion, for in God's presence is the fullness of joy.**

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11 ESV).

Religion causes people to enjoy *life* less and enjoy *sin* more. Kingdom people enjoy *life* more and enjoy *sin* less. Therefore, Kingdom Christians are glad to give up the lesser pleasures of sin.

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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 (Matthew 13:44 ESV, emphasis added).

If you haven't yet found that joyous life, you have not yet found the Kingdom life. Some think that being a Christian means *sacrificing* their worldly and sinful life, but it's much better than that! It's about having inferior life *replaced* with superior life. Therefore, surrendering to God is not really sacrifice; it's a glorious *exchange* – the greatest transaction you will ever make.

### *Religion Hinders Intimacy with God*

If you have been spiritually stuck, despite all your striving, there might be a religious spirit at work. Despite their hours or years of study, the religious lack true revelation of the Scriptures. Their times of Bible study are dry. Their church services feel dead. They don't experience the presence and power of God, as they should; their religious mindsets have damned up the manifest presence of God in their lives – they are dull of revelation and void of God's power.

You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29 ESV).

Religion will cause you to hit a brick wall in intimacy with God. Banging your head against a wall is a practice you can only keep up for so long. Those who are weary of pursuing God are probably victims of religion. On the other hand, **Kingdom-cultured citizens have fresh encounters with God through the Scriptures and enjoy sweet communion with Him.** Since religion isn't suffocating their spirit, they

are free to know God, experience Him and enjoy Him. In the Kingdom, personal time in the Scripture is life giving, and personal time in prayer is delightful. Kingdom citizens don't put up subconscious walls that keep them distant from God. They know they are children of the King, so they come boldly to His throne of grace (see Hebrews 4:16) and enjoy the wisdom and power of their loving Father.

### *Religion Devalues People*

Religious Cain killing his brother Abel is a picture of how religion doesn't value the human being. The Pharisees treated their animals better than human beings (see Luke 13:14-16). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, two religious leaders walked past a man who was bleeding to death (see Luke 10:25-37), but a less religious Samaritan had compassion upon the man, attended to his needs, and paid for all the medical expenses. Jesus praises the Samaritan, who had more Kingdom culture than the religious folks.

**The Kingdom always emphasizes the value of the soul.** Jesus shared that one soul was more valuable than the whole world (see Luke 9:25). He taught that humans are more valuable than the members of the animal kingdom (see Matthew 10:31). Kingdom culture pays attention to each person, not just crowds. Religious leaders love crowds; Jesus loves individuals. Religion sees people as numbers; the Kingdom sees numbers as people.

Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance (Luke 15:7 ESV).

Religious Christians might be zealous for God, but they don't know how to treat people right. They have an attitude that says, "I'm more

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important than you and I'm holier-than-thou!" That is pride, and it's stench in the nostrils of God. The Pharisees were faithful to give the tithe, but they did not give honor to their relationships. **The religious may be faithful in their church duties, but they are loveless in their relationships.**

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel (Matthew 23:23-24 ESV).

While Jesus did not condemn tithing, He made it clear that they were missing a huge component: loving relationships. Justice, mercy, and faithfulness are practiced in the context of loving relationships. Religious people don't know how to treat others right because they don't know how to treat themselves right. Since they always emphasize how wretched and unworthy *they* are, it's understandable that they see others as wretched and unworthy, too.

In the following text from the book of John, Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6, sharing that God sees us as divine. This passage is not saying that you are God, for there is only one God! But remember, only human beings are made in the image of God (see James 3:9).

Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man,

claim to be God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, *‘I have said you are gods?’* If he called them *‘gods,’* to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp (John 10:32-39 NIV).

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Is a passion and zeal for God really all you need? Why or why not?
- Explain why religious living will lead people to have a secret life.
- Why do you think religious people are unloving towards people?



# 17

## *Religion Kills Potential*

**R**eligious Christianity kills your potential, while Kingdom Christianity maximizes your potential. When religious Cain took his brother's life, it depicted religion's desire to kill the potential of each human being. How does religion kill a person's potential?

### *Religion Emphasizes the In-nobility of Humans*

The religious leaders of Jesus' day cringed every time He referred to Himself as the Son of God. They had such a low view of "humanity" that anyone else who understood their nobility became an irritation to them. While the religious separated their identity from God, Jesus found His identity as God's beloved Son, which drove the Pharisees crazy.

Mankind is the apex of God's creation, and your sonship is restored when you become a Kingdom citizen. Jesus often spoke of the "sons of the Kingdom" (*sons* is not gender specific). He said to believe in the light, so you may become *sons of light* (see John 12:36). He told Mary, "I am ascending to My Father and *your Father*, my God and your God" (John 20:17 ESV).

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Your primary identity is not a slave, but a son of God. The King died for lost sons, not slaves. Jesus died for us, but He didn't die for the angels. Angels are the servants of God's sons (Hebrews 1:14): This is how noble you are! We must see ourselves as sons and walk in confidence, knowing our significance, authority, and potential. See yourself as royalty, and don't buy religion's lie that you are just a beggarly servant. **You are a son who happens to serve your Father, not a slave who is hopelessly striving to become a son.**

A servant in a king's court is not deserving of honor. But a king's son needs to be recognized and honored. God doesn't want us to just see ourselves as worthless servants; we are royal children. Religion says, "God is great, but His people are insignificant." Kingdom says, "God is great, and His sons are amazing!" Go figure why Kingdom-minded people end up dreaming bigger, achieving more, and living a more fulfilling life than the religious.

### *Religious Leaders Can't Share Power*

The religious Pharisees longed to attract followers who would idolize and depend upon them. The Pharisees studied arduously for many years, with hope that they would one day be honored, influential, and sought after. But they refused to share their popularity and power with anybody else. When Jesus emerged as the new dynamic leader on the block, they couldn't stand losing their position in people's hearts. **It's not wrong to desire influence – that's in our DNA – but something is wrong if we cannot share our influence with others.** Something is wrong when we would rather attract followers than develop and deploy leaders.

God did not want Israel to have a king and warned that if they appointed a king, only one person would be powerful while the rest of



the people would live pathetically. God's heart was never to have one fat-cat on the throne with other people serving as stepping-stones to his vision. God wants all of us to help each other see our dreams fulfilled, for a desire fulfilled is the Tree of Life (see Proverbs 13:12). God wants all the people of His Kingdom to have divine dreams and goals, and see them fulfilled! It was never God's desire for people to just be puppets in the hands of an egotistical king. **He gives purpose, vision, and calling to all of His sons, and one is not more important than another.** When someone loses their ability to dream, their heart becomes very sick, for we were all made to be dreamers and goal-getters.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but *when* the desire comes, *it is* a tree of life (Proverbs 13:12 NKJV).

If you are an anointed, appointed leader, entrusted with the responsibility to lead God's people, remember that your vision is not greater than somebody else's. You need to create a culture of mutual support, servanthood, and empowerment. Don't make people give up their own visions in order to serve yours. Don't make them lose their ability to dream, because you've kept them so busy working on your dream. Leadership is about releasing people into their own callings, not making them slaves of your calling. A leader's responsibility is to maximize *everyone's* potential, not just one's own. The way to win this world is to help everyone get to the top.

In religious churches, there is an obvious leader who sits on a royal throne. The members of his or her congregation kiss the floor he walks on. They see him as the exception instead of the example. They don't believe that they can ever be as enlightened or influential as he. While there is nothing wrong with honoring a church leader, there *is* something wrong if a pastor is the only one who can heal the sick, cast out demons, and

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teach the Word, while the people have become professional pew sitters and offering givers. **We must be about impartation, not idolization.** Jesus imparted to His disciples the ability to do what He did and more (see Matthew 10:8, John 14:12). He was not threatened by their success; He rejoiced at their progress! This is Kingdom culture.

Jesus appoints leaders in His Church to train you to maximize your potential (see Ephesians 4:11-13), not entertain you with their gifts. The Pharisees entertained, but Jesus imparted. The Pharisees loved the honor and respect that they received from people; they wanted to be on a pedestal. They wore clothes that set them apart (Pharisee actually means *separatists*). They saw themselves as a superior bunch and wanted it kept that way. They loved titles and recognition. This is a religious spirit at work. I do not write this as a bitter layperson. I've been a clergyman since I was nineteen years old, but this issue needs to be addressed for us to see Kingdom culture. **Everyone should be honored and esteemed, not just the clergy, for everyone's purpose is important!**

Tragically, even today, religious leaders think that *their* calling is nobler than someone else's. It's easy to see why their followers see "The Ministry" as the highest calling, which by default implies that they have a "lower calling." Full-time pastors are not superior to those who work in the marketplace. Every calling is precious to the Lord and, therefore, must be precious to us. Primarily, religion celebrates the preaching, teaching, and singing gifts, but *every* gift is divine. The Kingdom honors each calling and cherishes every gift that the Lord has deposited within people. We are all brothers, we are all students, and we are all to serve one another.

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.

Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant (Matthew 23:8-11ESV).

## *Religion Murders Dreams*

**Religion castrates a person's ability to dream big dreams, because it preaches that the desire for greatness is Satanic, when it is really divine.** Religion will cause you to write off your prophetic vision by labeling your compassion as ambition. When you have a mindset that resists dreaming big, your life will be constipated.

A friend of ours was on a mission trip to Africa, and the restrooms were horrible. The toilet was nothing more than a dirt hole with bugs and flies everywhere! For seven days our friend couldn't use the toilet. When he was asked why he couldn't go, he said, "My body said *yes*, but my mind said *no*." Since his mind was so repulsed by the bathroom, he couldn't use it. If your religious mindset is disgusted by thoughts of manifesting your personal greatness, you will not be able to release the greatness that God gave you. You will unnaturally stop something that was supposed to flow naturally.

Satan has been able to rampantly spread his culture upon earth because the children of God have been duped by religion. They have drowned their divine dreams in the ocean of religiosity, and they are indoctrinated with false humility, which preaches that a boring life is a holy life. **The truth is that we are made for excitement and adventure; we are born to shoot for the stars!**

Religion insists that hiddenness is a virtue, but Jesus taught, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew

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5:14 ESV). While we've been hiding in our churches, the devil's children have been faithfully and effectively spreading their culture (nobody is telling *them* to choke *their* dreams). As long as we allow those who are not Kingdom-cultured to claim all the influence, our world will continue to look like hell on earth. We desperately need God's righteous children to manifest their purpose and become the people of power and influence in our world.

As the righteous grow powerful, people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, people groan (Proverbs 29:2).

Recently, after I taught on this very point, a young man was very disturbed, and he came to talk to me. He came from a long line of Christian ministers, and his parents were committed missionaries in a remote village of a poor country. All his life he was told that it was selfish and sinful to have big dreams of global impact. He was encouraged just to keep busy with church duties and not entertain thoughts of greatness. But, after he heard that the desire for greatness was from God, and that he needed to be influential for the Kingdom to be established, he then realized it was actually sinful and selfish not to be a world-changer. He realized it was wrong not to *dream big* with God and *do great things* through the power of God.

The human potential is so great that, even in our imperfect state, God says if we will set our mind to something and work together toward it, the sky is the limit (see Genesis 11:6). If God saw how tremendous the potential was within a fallen human being, how much more potential is in the new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)? We need to shine forth and spread heaven's culture on earth!

## *Religion Condemns*

One way religion pops those Spirit-inspired dreams is through the needle of condemnation. **Religion preaches that you are unworthy of your hopes and disqualified from your dreams.** But the Kingdom declares to its citizens, “You are righteous through King Jesus!” (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Pharisees caught a woman in the act of adultery. They dragged her across the dirt by her hair and threw her at the feet of Jesus, saying, “Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” (John 8:5). They were just itching to see this woman’s head smashed; religion loves to throw stones at fallen sinners. They knew Jesus had a way of showing mercy, restoring broken people, and imparting new hope and a sense of dignity to the most undeserving. So they put Him to the test. Jesus begins to write something on the ground and then declared, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). What Jesus wrote on the floor remains a mystery, but clearly the people were impacted by Jesus’ actions:

But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more” (John 8:9-11 ESV).

**King Jesus revealed that the mission of the Kingdom is restoration, not condemnation.** He did not cuff her with more condemnation. Instead, He unlocked her from those paralyzing chains, and encouraged and empowered her to live a transformed life.

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She couldn't live a new life until Jesus gave her a new identity. **Religion demands that you live a holy life, but it does not empower you with new identity.** The religious strive to become someone they don't believe they are. What a stressful experience! In the Kingdom, you are given a new identity in Christ and then released to live who you *are*. You're not trying to earn an identity because you already have it! You can rest in Jesus and allow the reality of your new identity to flow from you. Life in His kingdom is restful, not stressful (see Matthew 11:28-30), because He gives you a new identity, one that is not condemned (see Romans 8:1). *(For a deeper study on our new identity, see my book: Never Burn Out: Discover the Reality of Your Identity.)*

A condemned person's creativity is quenched and their productivity is stifled. Contrarily, righteousness-consciousness (faith in your new identity in Christ) will unleash creativity and productivity. While Satan says, "Shame on you," because he is the "Accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10), Jesus says "Shame off you," because He is our Savior. **The Accuser labels you according to your past mistakes. The Savior labels you according to your future glory.** Who would *you* rather listen to?

A condemned person will think that their miserable life is their deserved fate. This is precisely how some religions have justified those at the bottom of their caste system. They justify poverty and suffering as their "karma." In other words, they are being punished for what they have done in the past or their past lives. Religion condemns. The Kingdom says that your sins are forgiven and all the mistakes of your past will somehow work together for the good, because of the grace and mercy of God (see Romans 8:28)! Even your *mistakes* can be redeemed and turned into a *ministry*.

Religion persuades you that you can't *do* anything special, *have* anything special, and *be* anything special, for you *aren't* that special.

**Religion makes you believe that you aren't worth much and so you shouldn't expect much.** Sadly, you will go without God's blessing because you continue to doubt God's goodness toward you. You will never pray with faith, because you don't believe you are worthy of answered prayer, for you are despicable in God's sight. The scary reality is that you attract what you believe – good or bad.

According to your faith be it done to you (Matthew 9:29).

Religion expects you to find your identity in your works, which breeds self-condemnation and sometimes, self-righteousness. The ugly twin of self-condemnation is self-righteousness, and neither is God's will for our lives. The more self-condemning or self-righteous you become, the less godly you become.

We as Kingdom citizens have not earned our citizenship and sonship through our performance (it can't be done). Our righteousness is a gift that Jesus paid for and one that we have humbly received through child-like trust. We wear this gift boldly, yet humbly. We have been forgiven much, so we love much (see Luke 7:47). Therefore, Kingdom citizens ought to be the most compassionate and loving people on Planet Earth. Thus, we seek to restore the fallen, instead of chucking stones at them. **Condemned people condemn others. Forgiven and restored people forgive and restore others.**

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should *restore* him in a spirit of gentleness... (Galatians 6:1).

### *Religion Suppresses*

Religion is suppressive. Some churches have worked overtime to get their members to become *servants in the church* instead of *leaders in the world*, making them think that serving in the church is the only way to serve God. Religion says that the one who cleans the most toilets in the church will have the biggest mansions in heaven. Jesus is all for servanthood, and yes, He did wash the disciples feet, but He did more than that. He served His generation by maximizing His destiny. He perfected His gifts and shared them with the world. He didn't just remove germs from toilets and fungus from feet; He eternally impacted countless lives, and He is the model for every Kingdom citizen.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't serve our churches, but the way we will spread Kingdom culture in our world is through releasing our potential and becoming the most influential people on earth (Proverbs 29:2). Serving in the church by doing chores is a very beautiful thing to do, but don't forget that you need to maximize your potential, which includes a lot more than scrubbing the bathrooms or changing diapers in the nursery department. Don't let religion suppress your ultimate purpose.

### *Religion Instills Fear*

Jesus taught that the Kingdom is like leaven, and it has its greatest impact when it is in flour, not when it's sitting with other leaven (see Matthew 13:33). We can only unleash our full potential when we are outside the four walls of the church! The greatest impact a lamp can have is when it's placed in a dark room, not when it's in a room where all the lights are already on.

Religion likes to strike fear in people by telling them that the world is a dangerous place. Do you know why religious people are so afraid of the



world's lure? **Here is religion's dirty little secret: The world's culture is more attractive than religious culture.** This explains the mass exodus of young people out of the church, once they get their driver's license or go off to college. But the world's culture is not attractive at all when it is compared to the Kingdom culture. Kingdom-cultured people will not be sucked into the world – they overcome the world and change it (see 1 John 5:4).

Religious leaders know how enticing the world is compared to religion, so they will seek to keep you in seclusion and lock you up in a monastery, and then they tell you it will be all worth it because you will spend eternity in heaven. **Religion promotes an escapist mentality.** I heard Dr. Martin Williams say, “*Religion says, ‘Let’s take off!’ While the Kingdom says, ‘Let’s take over!’*” Religion preaches that you must endure life here on earth, and one day you will get to enjoy life in heaven. But the Kingdom mindset says, “I can enjoy heaven on earth now, and I will spread heaven on earth now!” Yes, we look forward to going to heaven one day, but we look forward to *everyday* because everyday is another opportunity to enjoy and spread the Kingdom.

### *You are Destined to Shine!*

The book of Esther opens with King Xerxes purposing in his heart to show off his queen. He knew how beautiful she was – he had chosen and adorned her – but now he wanted her to come out of her seclusion and shine in public! Likewise, it's King Jesus' desire for His bride to come out of her seclusion to dazzle this world! Yet, Queen Vashti did not want to come out. She told her husband no. I'm not sure why she denied him; maybe she felt unqualified; maybe she was just lazy or preoccupied. King Xerxes was extremely insulted by her act of disobedience.

The bride of King Jesus is also saying *no* to the call to come forth and shine, choosing, instead, to staying in her comfort zone. She feels

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unqualified; she's lazy and preoccupied. But, Jesus made it clear that we are a city on a hill that cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:14). During the city's initial construction, it may be hidden, but after years of development, it's time for that city to shine! **You might be hidden for some years as God does a deep work in you, but the time will come for you to step out into your destiny and shine!** You can't stay hidden forever.

Vashti was unwilling to come out of her comfort zone, so she missed out on her destiny, and the king had to find a replacement. When you dishonor the King by failing to obey His call, due to shyness or negligence, He will raise up someone else to take your place. When one generation of Israelites wasn't willing to step into their destiny, God waited for the next generation. It's true that there will never be another you. You come around once in eternity. But, if you say *no* and refuse to shine, somebody else can be raised up to take your place. Don't let religious mindsets stop you from being you. **The King is most glorified by the unveiling of His bride! You are destined to shine and reveal your special purpose to the world.**

### Discussion Questions:

- Why is every human being (saved or unsaved) so precious?
- How come Kingdom people are more focused on the ministry of restoration than condemnation?
- Why is it dangerous to embrace an escapist mentality?



# **PART 4**

*Spreading Kingdom  
Culture*



# 18

## *Kingdom Culture will Spread*

**W**hat is the percentage of heaven's culture on earth? In the Garden of Eden, before the Fall, it was one hundred percent; in Sodom and Gomorrah it was almost zero, and today it is 3.458 percent. I'm just kidding – I have no idea, but I *do* know that it is our job to raise that percentage! This is our mission, and we all have a part to play. Let's discover how we can practically spread heaven's culture on earth.

### *Destined to Increase*

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government [Kingdom] and of peace [culture] there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this (Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV).

It's been prophesied that Kingdom culture will continue to increase. There have been many fads in Christianity that have come and gone,

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but the Kingdom of God is not a fad, and Kingdom culture is not *a* move of God, it's *the eternal* move of God. There is one movement that Jesus Christ, Himself, came to start, and it's called the Kingdom of God. There is no stopping this move! Jesus is looking for those who are consumed with the zeal of the Lord to partner with Him for Kingdom expansion! I hope and pray that through us, "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14 ESV).

Jesus prophesied, "The gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a *testimony* to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14 ESV, emphasis added). What does it mean that the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached as a testimony? First, the gospel of the Kingdom is not the gospel of religion, but an invitation into Kingdom culture. Second, if somebody is testifying about the Kingdom that means they have experienced it! Furthermore, the nature of the Kingdom is expansionary. Its influence may begin small, but it will snowball and inevitably grow. Hear how Jesus described the nature of the Kingdom:

He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it *grew* and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches" (Luke 13:18-19 ESV, emphasis added).

### *Infesting this World with Heaven*

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere (2 Corinthians 2:14 ESV).

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Culture is experiential. You can see, smell, taste, hear, and feel it. We are called to give this world a cultural *experience*. When we've allowed the Kingdom to culture us, we release the fragrance of God everywhere we go, which allows others to experience our Kingdom. Some who insist they are wearing the culture of God are actually wearing religion's couture. When you wear Kingdom culture as you would wear cologne or perfume, you will change atmospheres and lead a cultural revolution. You will make earth look more like heaven everywhere you go, so we must not be afraid to get out of the church buildings and infiltrate the world's system with our Kingdom life.

Let's take another look at the parable in Matthew 13:33, because it is loaded with keys for spreading Kingdom culture.

The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened (ESV).

### **1. *Leaven goes to work and releases its potential when it engages flour.***

As we saw in an earlier chapter, flour is a picture of this world. Church people who are afraid to engage the world will not be able to release their full potential. We will have more testimonies to share when we start reaching out to those in the world, instead of just playing church. It's the sick that need the physician (see Matthew 9:12-13).

### **2. *It doesn't take much leaven to infect the whole lump.***

Kingdom Christians are so powerful that even though we are few, we are mightily effective. If a few religious terrorists can devastate New York

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City, how much more can a few *Kingdom* citizens bring Abundant Life to their cities? A small church took over a run-down hospital in one of the worst parts of Los Angeles. They began reaching out to their community and “prostitution and gang violence dropped 73%, the homicide rate dropped 28%, and rape dropped 53%.”<sup>3</sup> The Mayor and City Council publicly acknowledged the dramatic impact of the Los Angeles Dream Center. Needless to say, this church is not small anymore.

### 3. *Leaven never conforms to the nature of the flour; instead it transforms the essence of the flour.*

Kingdom culture will never conform to this world’s culture, but it *will transform* the world. As Kingdom citizens, we are catalysts of change in this world. At the end of your life, may your testimony be, “I changed the world” and not: “The world changed me.” Don’t be afraid! Jesus dwells in you, and He has already overcome the world, so its culture ought to be afraid of you (see John 16:33). Remember, greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world (see 1 John 4:4). We must not be afraid to spend time with the sinners and broken people – we bring Hope!

### 4. *Leaven naturally goes to work and its impact is not forced.*

Leaven just has to be itself to be effective. Leaven doesn’t have to preach at the flour in order to change the flour, but it just needs to be true to itself. As a Kingdom citizen, you just need to be you – the real you. Christian life is not about *doing* more, but *being* more. We *are* salt and light; we don’t have to try to act salty or illuminating (see Matthew 5:13-14). Kingdom life is about *being*. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit

<sup>3</sup> [wikipedia.com/dream\\_center](http://wikipedia.com/dream_center)



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will enable us to *be* a witness, not *do* witnessing (see Acts 1:8). Ministry comes out of the overflow of our *being*. Your lifestyle is to be your most powerful message.

A young man worked extremely hard to impress a certain girl. He put padding in his shoes to become three inches taller. He talked in an unnaturally deep voice. He tucked his stomach in, while trying to hide the fact that he was running out of breath. He put on his best mask and squeezed his brain to sound more intellectual than he was, and he finally won that girl over. She decided to marry him. Do you think he can keep up that performance for fifty years? I doubt it. Unfortunately, many Christians live this way; they are *striving*. How much easier would it be if the young man was just himself, and the girl fell in love with him? How much easier would their marriage be? How much healthier would their relationship be? When we interact with people, we just need to be our true born-again, Kingdom-cultured selves. The world will fall in love with the character of Christ that has been fused into your character and being.

I used to think I had to lock myself up on a mountain to fast and pray for three days before I could preach. I wouldn't minister to anyone if I didn't put in that effort. I'm not against prayer and fasting; I understand its importance and power, but the Lord showed me that Kingdom is our *lifestyle*, not a performance we need rehearsals for. I learned that I could minister to anyone, anytime, because God flows out of my being. I still spend time with the Lord before I preach, but I don't want to spend time with Him only because I have to preach. I want to *be* intimate with Him and *be* powerful for Him all the time. This is Kingdom culture!

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### 5. *Leaven is most influential when activated by heat.*

It was when Jesus was hanging on the cross that the centurion recognized Him as the Son of God. When others mistreat you, that is the time to manifest your sonship! Jesus told us to do good to those who mistreat us, so that we can manifest ourselves as sons of our Father. Joseph excelled through his trials and temptations. Daniel radiated Kingdom when he was thrown in the lion's den. When the world sees how you display heaven in the midst of temptation and trials, they will want to know our culture. When they see you live sexually pure in the midst of flaring temptations, when they see you live honest even when the pressure is on, when they see you hopeful in the midst of discouraging times, when they see you prosper in recession, when they see you love the unlovable, they will witness the Kingdom through you!

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Why is there hope that Kingdom culture will spread?
- What is the difference between doing witnessing versus being a witness?
- Why do you think Christians have been so afraid of spending time with sinners?

# 19

## *Seven Keys to Establishing Kingdom Culture*

### *1. Respond with the Opposite Spirit*

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good  
(Romans 12:21 ESV).

**W**e won't change this world by acting just like it; we must be in the opposite spirit. Jesus taught us to bless those who curse us and to pray for those who spitefully use us (see Matthew 5:44). This speaks of responding with the opposite spirit.

King Solomon wrote, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1 ESV). When we respond with the *opposite* spirit, we will destroy the power and assignment of a wrong spirit! We will destroy worldliness and religiosity through Kingdom culture because the Kingdom is *opposite* to those inferior cultures.

Jesus said, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28 ESV). Kingdom culture will spread as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit who is *opposite* to the evil spirits in the world. To counteract all those

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who are possessed and oppressed by evil spirits, be filled with the Holy Spirit!

To counteract the spirit of deception, be a person of honesty and integrity! To counteract laziness, have contagious zeal and admirable diligence. To counteract fear and worry, have unshakeable faith. To counteract ignorance, be a person of wisdom and revelation. To counteract the perversion in our world, happily practice right living. To counteract hopelessness, be hopeful. To counteract the rebellious spirit, be submissive to your leaders, and teachable. To counteract pride, be humble and have a servant's heart. To counteract anger, be gentle. To counteract a complaining spirit, have a thankful heart. To destroy greed, be generous.

I was spending time with a friend when he started to speak very negatively about a man we know. I decided to respond with the *opposite* spirit and spoke positively about the man, complimenting him. While my friend was focusing on the worst in the man, I decided to focus on the good. **As I responded with the *opposite* spirit, something shifted in the atmosphere.** My friend was not able to make me bitter toward the man; instead, I succeeded in helping my friend appreciate and value him.

This needs to happen on a global scale. Shine forth your culture, for your light will cast out their darkness. We are called to bring a cultural revolution.

## 2. *Miracles, Healing, and Deliverance*

Jesus didn't just talk about the Kingdom; He *demonstrated* it. As a kid, I loved going to certain markets because they would give out samples of the newest and best foods. I'd get to the store hungry and leave full and satisfied. If something was extremely tasty, I'd beg my mom to buy it for me. Jesus sent out His disciples to promote the Kingdom and give out

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samples. He commissioned them to “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8 NIV). **Miracles, healing, and deliverance are samples of our Kingdom, and I believe that we ought to pass out these samples on a regular basis.**

Every year, we take a number of trips to the nations, and we do more than just tell them about the King or present the message of the Kingdom; we give them samples of miracles, healing, and deliverance. The samples draw crowds and are instrumental in helping people come into the Kingdom. Kingdom samples work everywhere! During my college years, my buddies and I would go to emergency rooms to heal the sick. We would walk into that room, see all those dejected faces, and ask if anybody would like prayer for healing. I have numerous stories to tell about how they enjoyed their samples of the Kingdom.

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father (John 10:37-38 ESV).

Jesus told the religious leaders that His samples were believable, and He was hoping that through the samples, they could see that Jesus was the authorized representative of the Father. We are also authorized representatives of the Kingdom, and our samples ought to support it. Let's give the world a cultural experience!

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them;

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they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover  
(Mark 16:17-18 ESV).

### *3. Following God's Voice*

The Israelites were a prototype of the church, and they possessed their promised land as they followed the voice of God. Joshua only succeeded as he heard God and stepped out on that word. Under Joshua's leadership, Israel took land away from the pagans, who represent the evil culture of this world. We need to hear from God and do what He says if we want to see a cultural revolution!

If you feel out of touch with God's voice, take some time to fast and pray; unplug from the busyness of life and get re-sensitized to His voice. **Hearing and obeying His voice makes us effective as cultural revolutionaries.** If we make all of our decisions based upon natural information (such as common sense, research, advice from people), we will miss out on a supernatural life of impact! Natural information is not useless, but it is very limited, and God doesn't want you to live a limited life! He wants you to have unlimited impact for His glory. So, never forget that we can tap into the voice of God. Ask God questions, expect Him to talk to you, and obey what He says. This is what it means to live by faith instead of by sight or reason. A life of faith is a life of rewarding adventure! We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7 ESV).

### *4. Excelling in Your Purpose*

As Adam and Eve took care of the Garden of Eden, they were to develop and expand it. Eden is a picture of your purpose. You were placed on earth to work your purpose. Eden means delight, and there is great delight as you develop your destiny. The more you take care of your

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purpose, the more you will grow in your influence! (For a deeper study on this topic, see my book, *Powered by Purpose: Discover WHY you are.*)

Your gifts are tools to your purpose. As you continue to develop your gifts, you will grow in your influence, and as you grow in your influence, heaven's culture will spread. Right now, the wrong people have too much influence. This must change.

I encourage you to create a product that is related to your purpose. Think about this: When God wanted to spread His Kingdom, He created a product – mankind. If we want to spread Kingdom culture, we, too, need to create products. Release your creative abilities and write songs, create a business, publish books, create videos, produce a movie, patent an invention, develop a curriculum, etc. Let's take it one step further, prayerfully start a business or an organization that is related to your purpose.

### **5. Words**

Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37 ESV).

Jesus never hurt anybody physically or led a revolt, but He conquered empires through His words of truth. His words are atomic bombs, weapons of mass destruction, bringing destruction to the establishments of the devil.

Your words can transform cultures! Jesus changed people's mindsets, and when you change mindsets, you change lives; when you change lives, you change culture, and when you change culture, you change the world.

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Culture is built upon ideas, and ideas are built upon words. Your words carry the ideas that have the potential to change culture. **Words paint culture. Keep painting, and make this world a more beautiful place to live.** Don't be afraid to speak up and speak out. You were born to communicate! Be a spokesperson for the Kingdom – communicate truth and expose the lies of the enemy with tact and love.

James talked about how you can spread *hell-fire* with your tongue (see James 3:6). If that's true, then we can spread the fire of *heaven's culture* with our tongues, too! The power of hell and heaven is in our tongues; what kind of fire are you spreading?

### 6. Prayer

When we go fishing, we bring what is in the water into the land. Prayer is like fishing: We can bring what is in the Kingdom into this world. Prayer is your fishing line or net that pulls heaven's resources into this realm. This is why we are commanded to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10 ESV). This is one of the primary purposes of prayer. When fishing, a general rule is that if you want to catch a big fish, use a bigger bait. In the kingdom, the bigger your faith and prayer requests, the bigger the blessings you can pull into the world.

Apart from a prayer life, we can do nothing. **Every ambassador needs to regularly check in with the King.** We must never lose reception. As the whale checks into a higher realm in order to find the oxygen it needs to survive in a lower realm, we need to come up into the presence of God in order to receive the wisdom, guidance, and power needed to be effective in this inferior realm called Planet Earth.



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I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5 NIV).

### **7. *Kingdom Communities***

My wife grew up in Japan and often visited an island named Okinawa where her mom is from, originally. There is a large U.S. naval base in Okinawa, and she said that when she went into the base, it felt like she was in the U.S. The people looked American and the sights and sounds were American. Though Japanese culture prevailed outside the base, inside the base, it was U.S. culture all the way. Some of the Okinawans enter into the base and then desire to go to America because they loved what they experienced. We are to establish Kingdom communities (bases), so people can get a sample of heaven. They should want to go to heaven, (receive Jesus Christ) when they experience our community.

What if the U.S. base was nasty and the U.S. citizens were pathetic, unattractive, cruel, and annoying? The Okinawans would have no desire to visit the base, much less America. The Americans could brag about their president all day long, but that would not make America attractive. Likewise, we can talk about how great Jesus is, but we also need to show off to the world the greatness of our country, the attractiveness of our citizens, and the matchless beauty of our culture. This would cause people to be interested in our Kingdom and fall in love with our perfect King.

### ***My Story***

I grew up in a religious church. I dreaded Sundays because I did not like church but I was forced to attend. The people were not very loving, and the services were boring. I had never experienced the tangible presence of God or seen His power transform a life. I had lost interest in

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Jesus because of His “representatives.” Being fed up with the hypocrisy and powerlessness of religion, I decided to chase after the alluring things of this world. My chase came to an abrupt end when my sister invited me to her church. Honestly, I went to her church, hoping to meet some cute girls – Jesus was the last Person on my mind. Ironically, I didn’t meet the cute girls, but I *did* meet Jesus.

I’ll never forget it; I was 13 years old, thinking that I was too cool for all this church stuff, but when I walked into *this* community, I immediately knew that something was different about this place. I felt the glory of God, the atmosphere of heaven. His manifest presence started melting my heart. Then the youth pastor told the young people to pray for another. I saw them praying for each other with such love and compassion; it was so foreign to me! Then, some of these young people cluttered around me, and they started praying for me with tears of love. I had never experienced such a thing!

Before I knew it, three hours had passed as I encountered God’s love and wept uncontrollably. I felt powerful electricity go through my entire body, and I began speaking in tongues. I would never be the same again. **I joined this community, for it was the most loving community I had ever experienced.** The youth pastor was a very empowering man. He never judged me, but he continually spoke God’s destiny over me, and everything he spoke came to pass. I can never go back to chasing after inferior things and living an inferior life. I can never deny His love for me, and I can’t stop telling people about Him. God used a Kingdom community to transform my life. In a few years, that community grew from twenty to two hundred, and many more lives were forever impacted.

I often meet people whose brokenness stems back to their upbringing in a dysfunctional family. I’m convinced that much healing and restoration will come to broken people through Kingdom-cultured communities.

## *Win the World through Kingdom Communities*

Jesus did not come to merely take people to heaven. He came to re-introduce heaven's culture to earth. Adam's job was to spread Kingdom culture, but he failed. Jesus came to successfully spread Kingdom culture, which is best enjoyed and displayed through a community. This is why Jesus took twelve disciples and formed an empowering community. Then Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to empower His community so they would be empowered to enjoy and spread Kingdom culture (see Acts 1:8; Romans 14:17). Then, Peter got up and preached on the day of Pentecost and thousands more wanted to join their community.

The infant church was in its purest form. Jesus' disciples, who had experienced direct *mentorship* from Jesus for over three years and had just received His Spirit, led this church in its infancy. As the church began to grow, no building could contain them, and they formed smaller communities that met in homes.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:46-47 ESV).

These Kingdom-cultured communities soon became the talk of the towns. Even those who didn't believe in Jesus Christ were drawn to these community gatherings. Soon, the *seekers* became *believers* and received the salvation of the Lord, causing these communities to multiply.

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that

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belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:32-37 ESV).

Remember, one of the five pillars of Kingdom living is *enjoying empowering relationships*. As the early church enjoyed these empowering relationships in the context of community, they grew in favor with people all the people and their communities began to grow (see Acts 2:47). It's not an accident that Barnabas's name was mentioned in the passage above. He was an encourager who empowered people, and empowering relationships were the *trademark* of these Kingdom communities!

As they enjoyed and displayed heaven's culture, new believers were efficiently discipled in these Kingdom cultured communities; **For the fastest way to be re-culture is to be immersed in a new culture (community), not being lectured to.** If we want to see the revival we've been praying for, we need to establish Kingdom-cultured communities. The following two passages reveal that Kingdom communities are keys to global evangelism and revival. I truly believe that multiplying Kingdom communities will destroy the work of the devil like an atomic bomb, rather than just a shotgun or a grenade; Here is why:

## *Seven Keys to Establishing Kingdom Culture*

[Jesus praying] I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me (*through united Kingdom communities, the world will come to believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be*). The glory (*The glory of God is more than a feeling, it speaks to us of His nature- His culture*) that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one (*Kingdom culture will bring forth greater unity*), I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, **so that the world may know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me** (*through united Kingdom communities, the world will come to believe and experience the love of God*). Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world (John 17:20-24 ESV () mine).

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil (*oil speaks of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the power of God*) poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion (*dew speaks of the refreshing presence of God*). For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore (*the blessing and life forevermore speaks of total prosperity*) (Psalm 133 NIV).

When we are enjoying Kingdom culture in the context of empowering Kingdom communities, just as we saw in the book of Acts, we will win

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the world. May the lost people of this world not experience just another religion when they visit our churches. May they experience Kingdom culture! May they experience relationship in its purest and healthiest form! May they experience the most empowering people they have ever met!

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Do you have a testimony of how responding with the opposite spirit changed the atmosphere?
- How are you using your words to change culture?
- How are Kingdom communities the key to global revival and effective discipleship?

# 20

## *It Starts with You*

Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21).

**K**ingdom expansion begins with you. **Kingdom culture begins within your heart and immediately flows into your relationships, and then out into the world.** It must not stay hidden in your spirit, but it must overflow from your soul and pour out from your life! So let's talk about how we can continue to see more of the Kingdom expressed through our lives.

### *Desire the Kingdom*

Our desires are magnets, what are you attracting into your life? Jesus warned us not to desire the culture of the world, for that is what we will attract and manifest. Instead, from our heart, we need to desire Kingdom culture, and then Kingdom culture will flood our hearts. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3 ESV). To be poor in spirit speaks of being desperate. **If we are desperate for the Kingdom, we will be filled with Kingdom Culture.** If you are not desirous of the Kingdom, you will not lay hold of

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it. Jesus said, “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12 ESV). If you want Kingdom culture, you need to lay hold of it with resilient zeal. You must have a violent resolution that you will not be denied. You must refuse any other life than the Kingdom life!

I believe this is why Jesus asked us to pray for the Kingdom to come and God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. There is something about desiring the Kingdom in prayer that causes the Kingdom and all its culture to manifest in our lives.

### *Learn of the Kingdom*

The Kingdom of God flourishing in your life will start with a seed. Jesus explained His famous *Parable of the Sower* by saying that the seed is the word of the Kingdom (see Matthew 13:19). This is why we need to tell people about the Kingdom, and it is why Jesus spent so much time preaching and teaching the Kingdom of God. In fact, even after His resurrection, He took forty more days to preach and sow those Kingdom seeds for a harvest of Kingdom culture. Paul spent the last years of his life preaching the Kingdom (see Acts 27:31). If you want Kingdom culture, it begins with Kingdom seeds.

Jesus explained, “When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart” (Matthew 13:19 ESV). **We need to learn of the Kingdom, but we really only *learn as much as we understand*.** Although I took Spanish in school for three years, I did not *learn* much Spanish at the time because I couldn’t *understand* some of the grammatical rules. If you don’t understand the Kingdom, you cannot really live it. This is why the teachings on the Kingdom from Jesus and the Apostles



needed to be preserved and passed on. This is why Jesus sent us His Spirit to be our personal tutor.

Satan would love to have us learn about so many other things in church, other than the Kingdom message of Jesus Christ. Satan likes it when we are distracted by the minors and miss the majors. He would prefer that we get stuck on side dishes and miss the main course, which is the message that most terrifies him –the message of the Kingdom. Satan will do whatever he can to keep you from understanding that message! He will try to fill you so full of the world or religion that you are empty of the Kingdom.

When I first heard Dr. Myles Munroe speak on the gospel of the Kingdom, I was in my first year of college. Unfortunately, for the previous five years, I had been smothered with religious teaching, and my mind was imprisoned by religious strongholds. As I listened to Dr. Munroe, it was difficult for me to understand and accept what he taught because it was so foreign to me. I remember many of his statements not being digestible to my religious stomach even though he supported everything he said with Scripture. It wasn't until a number of years later, when I met Dr. Munroe in person and had the rare privilege of spending quality time with this extremely busy man, that I started learning what it meant to be a Kingdom Christian. Dr. Munroe has been a very popular television personality and conference speaker, but he was by far the least religious person I had ever met. He was so free-spirited, powerful, confident, and empowering. When I asked him questions about the Kingdom, he would drop bombs that blew my religious mind.

Dr. Munroe encouraged me to read the four Gospels over and over again to catch the message of the true founder of Christianity – Jesus Christ – for there is no purer source, no purer message. He laid hands on

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me and prayed that God would give understanding in the Kingdom of God. After that prayer, every time I would read the Scriptures, I would see the Kingdom on almost every page! Dr. Munroe teaches that the Bible is about a King and His Kingdom, and I found that to be absolutely true. I read Dr. Munroe's wonderful books on the Kingdom, and finally, I was able to see what made him so different – it was the Kingdom message.

### *Fight for the Kingdom*

As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when *tribulation or persecution* arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but *the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches* choke the word, and it proves unfruitful (Matthew 13:20-22 ESV, emphasis added).

As we continue to learn from the *Parable of the Sower*, we see that before the Kingdom seed can manifest Kingdom culture, there will be a real fight! Unless you are willing to hold onto the Kingdom message, despite tribulation, persecution, and distractions, those seeds will not become fruit-bearing trees. Let me give you an example of a group that failed in this aspect.

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God (John 12:42-43 NIV).

Since these Jewish leaders prioritized comfort, popularity, and worldly benefits, they were not able to enjoy the Kingdom even though they believed in Jesus. If you want to enjoy the benefits of the Kingdom, you must desire its life more than comfort, popularity, or worldly riches and pleasures. **Kingdom life only manifests when you prioritize the Kingdom above worldly or religious benefits.** If you are addicted to comfort, popularity, money, and fleshly pleasures, you cannot truly enjoy the Kingdom life. But, if you understand the Kingdom message and make it your priority above the world and religion, and you are willing to fight for Kingdom culture, you will see the Kingdom manifest in your life!

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:10 ESV).

As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty (Matthew 13:23 ESV).

## *Final Words*

Kingdom culture is what Adam lost and what Jesus came to restore, and by the Holy Spirit, we can enjoy, express, and establish Kingdom culture now! So, let's keep learning about the Kingdom. Reject and repent of all worldly and religious mindsets. Let those Kingdom seeds go deep into your heart and take root. Remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit. You will see Kingdom culture spread throughout all the earth through you and your Kingdom community! You were made to be a powerful person of influence! You are called to be an ambassador of the Kingdom! We have been commissioned to give this world a cultural experience of heaven and an accurate picture of our King Jesus! As you be true to

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who you are, which is the salt and light of the earth (see Matthew 5:13-16), this world will become more and more thirty for the King and His Kingdom! They too will realize that they have been created for Kingdom citizenship and culture, and we will see people will give up everything for the King and His Kingdom! Get ready to witness a cultural revolution!

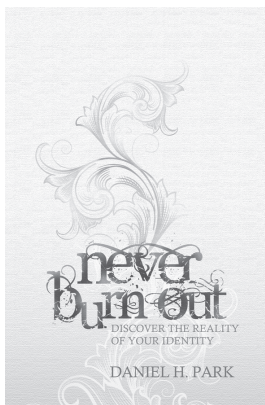
### **Discussion Questions:**

- Are you hungry for Kingdom culture? If so, how will you commit yourself to growing in Kingdom culture?
- Why is it so important that people capture the Kingdom message of Jesus Christ?
- Why do you need to fight for the Kingdom in order to enjoy, express, and establish Kingdom culture?

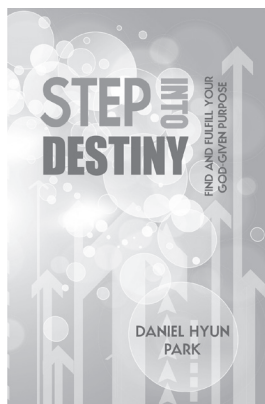




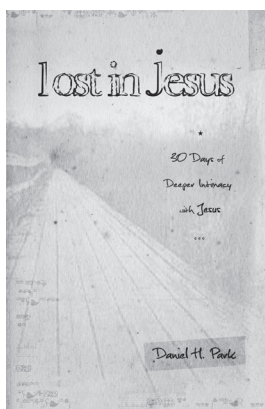
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