

“Christ and God’s Kingdom”

(The first importance passion of God’s people)



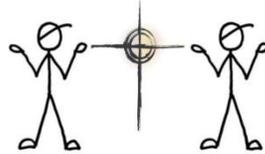
“Learning about making Jesus and His passion, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’, first in our lives”

(Leaders Guide)

(Note: The non-traditional wave menorah above represents the ‘Light of Christ’ and the new ‘Kingdom Way’ for God’s family of faith, ambassadors of “Christ and His Kingdom”. The leftmost higher candle represents Christ and the eight lower candles represent His teachings, His full counsel/wave for ushering in His Kingdom.)

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Table of Contents

Introduction - “Kingdom of Heaven (First)” 3
Lesson 1: The “Kingdom of Heaven” New Covenant Fulfilled in Christ..... 7
Lesson 2: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Is Near (Here)..... 11
Lesson 3: The “Kingdom of Heaven” responds to Christ-centered Prayer 14
Lesson 4: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Directs Those Who Seek God 18
Lesson 5: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Pairing of Blessings and Revelation 22
Lesson 6: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Light Shining in Lamps & Neon-Signs 27
Lesson 7: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Proclamation of Truth 31
Lesson 8: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Inheritance of Eternal, Unspeakable Joy 35
Classroom Lesson 1: (Review Notes) New Covenant Fulfilled in Christ 41
Classroom Lesson 2: (Review Notes) Near to Christ and His Kingdom..... 42
Classroom Lesson 3: (Review Notes) Responding to Christ-Centered Prayer 43

Introduction - “Kingdom of Heaven (First)”



Intro: The coming “Kingdom of Heaven” message (testimony) was one that Jesus lived for; gave His life for and calls His followers to make first in their lives (Mark 8:34, 1st John 2:5-6). Through “grace by faith” the King bestows His Kingdom upon believers as the Gospel message is revealed to them in “Spirit and Truth”. Paul shared the Gospel message as follows: *“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1st Cor. 15:3-4)”*

The “Living Word” (Living Testimony of Christ) indwells many hearts as the “Kingdom of Heaven” touches many lives (Luke 13:18-21). In the person and power of the Holy Spirit, the “Kingdom of Heaven” continues to draw people near to God (Matt. 4:17). The will of the Holy Spirit which is one with both the Father and the Son is to bring the “light, love and life” of Christ and His Kingdom into the world. The high calling of obedience to the will of the Spirit is emphasized in scriptures such as “work out your faith with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12)”. Living in unbelief of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit causes us to stand in opposition to God’s will and work. Followers of Christ understand that this ongoing work of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit is the lifeblood of the New Covenant church. Without blood the physical body dies. Similarly, separation from the lifeblood of Christ (His Word and Spirit) causes the premature death of both churches and individuals on earth. Separation from Christ can’t stop the ongoing work of the coming Kingdom of Heaven as it rests in the finished work of Christ on the cross and the Spirit being poured out from the wounds of our Lord (by His stripes we are healed).

This study will emphasize two aspects of the teachings of Christ and the “Kingdom of Heaven”:

- 1) Why living for the “Kingdom of Heaven” is of first importance (highest priority) and;
- 2) How believers can move from simply confessing “faith in Christ” to demonstrating a life of “faith expressing itself in love” as they see themselves united with “Christ and His Kingdom”.

I. There will be 8 “first importance” lessons taken from the teachings of Christ to identify important ways followers of Christ carry His message and Kingdom into the world:

Lesson-1: The “Kingdom of Heaven” New Covenant Fulfilled in Christ; God’s fulfilled promise has brought to humanity: a) an unbreakable covenant; b) a Living Way (access through grace by faith) to eternal life and c) everlasting love (nurture) through the life of Christ.

Lesson-2: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Is Near (Here); The Kingdom brings to those who respond to its invitation/message God Himself, His “love and power”.

Lesson-3: The “Kingdom of Heaven” responds to Christ-centered Prayer; The Kingdom comes through hearts prayerfully attuned to God’s presence and purpose for His people.

Lesson-4: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Directs Those Who Seek God; His Kingdom keeps (and protects) those who seek/receive His governance (the will of the Holy Spirit).

Lesson-5: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Pairing of Blessings and Revelation (Truth); Through blessings and revelation the Kingdom, the “body of Christ” receives a similar nurturing like a mother’s “love and instruction” shared with her child.

Lesson-6: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Light Shining in “Lamps & Neon-Signs”; God’s Kingdom brings His “forgiveness and righteousness” to light through the lives of His people through their intimate knowledge of Christ.

Lesson-7: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Proclamation of Truth; The “Kingdom of Heaven” is seen as the fulfillment of Scripture written upon and shared through the hearts of believers.

Lesson-8: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Inheritance of Eternal, Unspeakable Joy; The Lord’s Kingdom inheritance brings forth even now an eternal (supernatural) and unspeakable joy through His Spirit.

These eight lessons remind us of the significance of the number eight in the Bible. It’s the number of a new beginning as eight contains seven which itself signifies an end to a unit of time/work (ie. week); plus one which is associated with the beginning of a new era, day or order (Way). Christ has finished the work of washing our sin away on the cross (seven); plus given God’s people a new beginning (the indwelling Gospel message and His Spirit/New Way) to bring forth the “Kingdom of Heaven” to earth.



Note: This high priority icon will be displayed for the “first importance” section.

II. What does it mean to move from a life of simply confessing the truth about “Christ and His Kingdom” to a life of demonstrating “faith expressing itself in love” through “Christ and His Kingdom”?

The following is the simple definition and notation used in this study for sections that highlight “confessing the truth” and demonstrating “faith expressing itself in love”:

“confessing the truth”: declaring the revelations of Christ and His Kingdom Way as we receive life through them;



Note: This light-bulb icon will be displayed for the “confessing of faith” section.

“demonstrating faith”: demonstrating windblown (Spirit led) “words and deeds” that Christ joins with His Kingdom breaking through into the lives of others.



Note: This windblown icon will be displayed for the “demonstration of faith” section.

Christians have been born into the royal priesthood of the “Kingdom of Heaven”. Being “Kingdom of Heaven (first)” minded like Christ, leads believers to seek both Kingdom revelation and righteousness. We live passionately for His Kingdom as we trust in the Lord’s authority like the centurion did in Matt. 8:8-9.

Closing Thought: Disciples of Christ are called to keep their “new life” and eternal (new) hope first in their “hearts and minds” as they live as witnesses to the “Kingdom of Heaven”. They remain in Christ by staying focused on the new beginnings each day brings through the victory of the cross.



Questions:

Intro:

1. Why is living for the “Kingdom of Heaven” so important to us?
2. What and who is the foundation of the “Kingdom of Heaven”?
3. How does a believer enter into the “Kingdom of Heaven”?
4. Therefore, how/who should we look towards as we live in the “Kingdom of Heaven”?



5. How is the “Kingdom of Heaven” being manifested on earth?
6. Did Jesus emphasize the “Kingdom of Heaven” as he taught His disciples?
7. Do these high level themes listed in the lessons run through the teachings of Christ?
8. Why is it important to keep Bible teachings within the context of the “Kingdom of Heaven”?



9. What is the difference between confessing faith and expressing faith? What does expressing faith in love look like in your life as you place His Kingdom first?



10. How might the saying “They are so heavenly minded; they are no earthly good” be a short-sighted statement considering the Lord’ prayer (thy kingdom come, thy will be done)? Note: Aiming high does NOT mean you are ignorant of the events of this world...

Closing Prayer: Lord, you’ve called us into your marvelous light. Lead us to eternal life, its abundance and finding satisfaction in You alone. Help us let Your Kingdom shine through us...

Lesson 1: The “Kingdom of Heaven” New Covenant Fulfilled in Christ



Intro: The coming “Kingdom of Heaven” was ushered in through God’s “New Covenant”, His eternal plan fulfilled in Christ to connect humanity to Himself and His holy “love, power and life”. God’s fulfilled promise has brought to humanity: 1) an unbreakable covenant; 2) a Living Way (access through faith by grace) to eternal life and 3) everlasting love (nurture) through the life of Christ!



The perfect covenant made for believers between the Father and Son...

A. The Gospels reveal God’s Eternal Plan fulfilled as He has persevered in the lives of His people from the Old to the New Testament. Each Gospel connects with the message of the Old Testament:

- Mark 1 connects the reader from Messianic prophecy (John the Baptist) to God’s faithfulness;
- John 1 connects the reader from the operation of the Word at creation (“Let there be light”) to the operation of the “Living/Anointed Word” at the arrival of God’s Eternal Light;
- Matthew 1 connects the reader from the promise passed down through the generations to the acceptance of Jesus as Son of God (first by Joseph) and;
- Luke 1 connects the reader from God’s declaration over creation in Gen. 1:27 “it is good” to all that has been fulfilled for us, the good news (Luke 1:19).

B. What Christ Fulfilled (Detailed provision of the New Covenant)

The prophet Jeremiah in chapter 31 of the book of Jeremiah outlines for believers God’s “heavenly strategy” for His Kingdom come to earth through Christ. The following are some insights from Jeremiah’s new covenant prophesy being manifested as faith in Christ provides:

- One family: “A time when God will be the God of all the clans” (Jeremiah 31:1)
- Consistent love: “The Lord consistently declares His love for His people” (Jeremiah 31:3)
- The Hope of Restoration: “The Lord will build His people up again” (Jeremiah 31:4)
- A High Place with God: “Come let us go up to Zion to the Lord our God” (Jeremiah 31:6)
- The Joy of Undeserved Merit: “Sing with joy for Jacob” (Jeremiah 31:7)
- A New Vineyard: “The Lord will gather them from the ends of the earth” (Jeremiah 31:8)

- An Open Door: “They will weep and pray as I bring them back” (Jeremiah 31:9)
- Boldness: “They will proclaim the word of the Lord in distant coastlands” (Jeremiah 31:10)
- Freedom: “The Lord will ransom and redeem” (Jeremiah 31:11)
- Victory over Death: “The Lord will turn their mourning into gladness” (Jeremiah 31:13)
- Abundance: “God’s people will be filled with His bounty” (Jeremiah 31:14)
- Signs and Wonders: “signs of prophecy/promises being fulfilled” (Jeremiah 31:15-16)
- Future Hope: “There is hope for your future” (Jeremiah 31:17)
- New Life: “The Lord will create a new thing on earth---a woman will surround a man” (Jeremiah 31:22)
- Eternal Righteousness: “The Lord bless you, O righteous dwelling, O sacred mountain” (Jeremiah 31:23)
- Unity: “His people will live together” (Jeremiah 31:24)
- Refreshment: “God will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint” (Jeremiah 31:25)
- New Covenant: “God will make a new covenant” (Jeremiah 31:31)
- Void of Religious Works: “It will not be like the covenant(s) before” (Jeremiah 31:32)
- New Heart/Mind: “The Lord will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33)
- Intimacy with God: “They will all know me from the least to the greatest...” (Jeremiah 31:34)
- Eternal City: “God’s city will never again be uprooted or demolished” (Jeremiah 31:40)

Through the new covenant all of the above and more have been made available in His Kingdom!



What are the benefits that believers share under God’s covenant in Christ?

1. Sin is condemned (removed) through the suffering of Christ (Romans 8:3);
2. The “body of Christ” receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) and the Kingdom of Heaven (Luke 22:29).

God’s people (family) is united in: unconditional love; song and joy; from the ends of the earth; God’s promise being proclaimed; repentance; prayer; transformed from deceived to redeemed; turned from mourning into gladness; sharing freely His bounty; encouraging one another; serving in one accord; magnifying “King and Kingdom” and lifting up His purpose to bring “praise, honor and glory” to God.

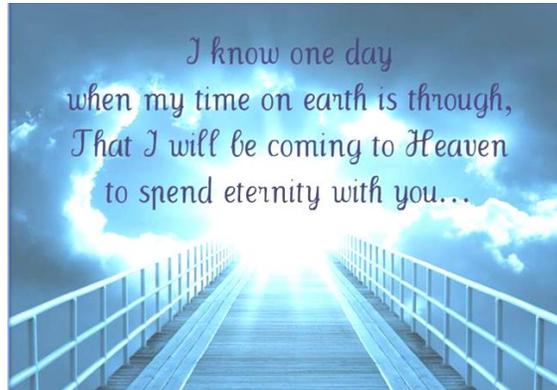


How do believers use the benefits they receive as they live under God’s covenant in Christ?

1. How do we experience the New Covenant Truth moving in/through us to others?
 - a. We operate from the place of abiding in the “Living Word” (John 15:4)
(Note: Not living from the law which is powerless but in the Spirit of Christ);
 - b. We look to God alone for our salvation daily (Isaiah 45:22).
(Note: Going from being an enemy of God to His favorite son or daughter.)
2. How do we share our life for others to trust in God’s New Covenant?
 - a. We speak God’s Truth in love (Eph. 4:15) through both “words and deeds” that lift up the name of Jesus and demonstrate that God moves believers past sin;
 - b. We demonstrate that the power of the blood of Jesus (God’s forgiveness) now available for

- servant/leaders, “new creations”, ministers of reconciliation (1 Cor. 5:14-18);
- c. We live as peacemakers;
 - d. We live for Christ and His Kingdom;
 - e. We let our self-directed lives become second to His holy life operating within us.

Closing Thought: The New Covenant in Christ is God’s eternal (first importance) plan for the coming of the “Kingdom of Heaven” to earth (fallen humanity) and our bridge to God.



Questions:

Intro:

1. The Kingdom of God rests in His New Covenant? What three things has the covenant provided for ALL believers?



2. The four Gospels have been given to us to provide us with God’s Word fulfilled in Christ and the covenant prophesies in the Old Testament (OT) such as Jeremiah. How has God fulfilled the covenant prophesied about in the OT using introductory statement of each Gospel?
3. Do the covenantal thoughts shared by God in Jeremiah point to the coming of Christ and His Kingdom? Can you map a verse in Jeremiah to a New Testament verse?



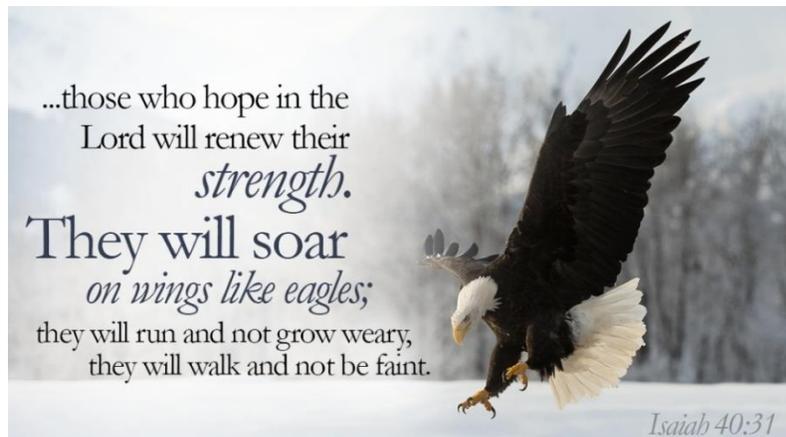
4. Do you see what’s been bound between a confession of faith and the unity of the body of servant/leaders (Christ)? What are some of the things being spoken about in Jeremiah 31?
5. Does this chapter give believers a fuller view of what God’s new covenant is binding believers to? As Jesus’ blood sacrifice begins believer’ journey in grace, discuss using the Jeremiah verses where His forgiveness is taking us...
6. How does Jeremiah 31 help us to look fully to God through the lens of the new covenant in order to view ourselves as God views us?



7. When God moves us beyond looking at your weaknesses and sin (past), how does this impact our willingness to serve Him? How does this change our attitude about serving Him?
8. How does trusting in His covenant empower us to serve Him? Knowing God's covenant directs us to share freely what He has given to us freely (grace) each day. How do we do this?

Closing Prayer: Lord, you made an unbreakable agreement for believers through your holy life and your finished work on the cross which can never be undone. Help us to both confess and profess with our lives what Your goodness (mercy) has made available to ALL who would come to You...

Lesson 2: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Is Near (Here)



Intro: The “Kingdom of Heaven” brings God’s peace, presence and eternal plan into all hearts who hear and turn (look) to God and what He had done through Christ the Messiah. It has brought to those who respond to its invitation/message God Himself, His love and power!

Gospel Invitation: ‘From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” (Matt. 4:17)’ ‘When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” (Matt. 9:2)’ [see also Mark 1:15] Note: Through repentance, turning to God’s invitation to be forgiven for all sin, the soul receives the living Jesus in “Spirit and Truth”, God’s peace, presence and purpose for life (to live as Jesus lived for the “Kingdom of Heaven”).



How believers embrace Christ and the “Kingdom of Heaven” through repentance?

A. Both Looking and Turning Towards God (Refocused through Repentance)...

“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. (Isa. 45:22)”

1. We’re looking (turning) towards the “Triune Nature” of God being revealed in our midst:
 - a. His Eternal Mind/Thoughts (God’s Management/Sovereignty through His unchanging Word);
 - b. His Eternal Way (God’s Daily Operation in “grace and truth”) and;
 - c. His Eternal Fruit (The handling of the fruit of His “grace and truth”).
(Note: Through repentance, we look towards our triune God and join Him in Kingdom labor.)
2. Three Questions asked that help us to look towards God (to see His will better):
 - a. Where/how am I focusing on God drawing me towards His thoughts, way and fruit?
Is this where/how God wants me to be focused?
 - b. Where/how am I looking for God’s “grace and truth” (love) at work in my circumstances?
Is this where/how God wants me to be looking for His operation/movement?
 - c. Where/how am I willing to serve God in the handling of the fruit of His “grace and truth”?
Am I willing to expand my availability in the handling of the fruit of His “grace and truth”?
(Note: Like a flower follows the sunlight in the sky, we follow the movement of God’s Kingdom.)

B. God enables (empowers) us daily as we seek His guidance through repentance...

1. This isn't a work of getting saved again; it's being directed towards Kingdom breakthrough as:
 - a. We turn away from rejection, guilt, shame, failure, etc. that is a part of our life here in His Kingdom coming to earth. Jesus taught Peter that he'd been set apart through the Word but needed to have his feet washed at His table. (John 13:8-10).
 - b. The Call to Repentance for believers is often a call to examine our hearts and motives in regards to being ministers of reconciliation (2nd Cor. 5:14-18).

An easy question to ask as we look and turn towards God is: "What would Jesus do?"



How the "Kingdom of Heaven" in Christ draws hearts to God's eternal sovereignty?

God wants hearts drawn to the Lord's commitment to God's Kingdom come as they look towards:

1. Lord Jesus, who brings the "King and Kingdom" to reign in redeemed souls through His "Good Testimony" and the Holy Spirit power of God (Mark 1:8, 11);
2. "New Life" through "grace and truth": the gift of Father (John 3:16); the operation of the Son (John 14:16) and the faithful labor of the Holy Spirit in the body (Acts 17:28);
3. Total dependence upon the finished work of the cross (John 6:29,40);
4. Royal Priesthood identity/position in the "Kingdom of Heaven" (1st Peter 2:9, Eph. 2:6).

(Note: This is why the work of repentance is so important, not to condemn the world but to draw others into the delight of God; His eternal salvation and presence.)



How the "Kingdom of Heaven" in Christ is directing hearts?

Believers look for opportunities to:

1. Demonstrate our total dependence upon the "Power and Love" of the Gospel as we have been empowered (Eph. 5:18 "filled with the Holy Spirit"; 2nd Cor. 4:7-9) to be witnesses;
2. Follow the teachings of Christ shared in the Gospels for "walking in the Spirit" (Acts 17:28);
3. Share freely what we received freely (Good News/New Life) as God's benevolence has come to us and wants to flow through us; "make a tree good and its fruit will be good - Matt. 12:33";
4. Expect and submit to the ongoing movement of the Kingdom of Heaven through the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:13-16) within our days.

Closing Thought: God has made it of first importance to turn to Him (His love) and His power as we enter into His "Kingdom of Heaven". Believers answer their call to be ministers of reconciliation through their availability/openness to be directed by the "Living Word".



Questions:

Intro:

1. What has been your first thought whenever you hear the word “repentance”? Does opening our eyes to or looking at God and His ongoing work help us to look at this word differently?



2. Should we have a daily/reset place where we look towards God’s “Management, Operation and Fruit” of His Kingdom come? When do we think about His Kingdom most? Isn’t God’s “Management, Operation and Fruit” ongoing? Where does this ongoing work happen in our lives?
3. Do we ask the three questions pertaining to repentance as we analyze our days, thoughts, decisions and actions? How could we benefit from lovingly doing this?



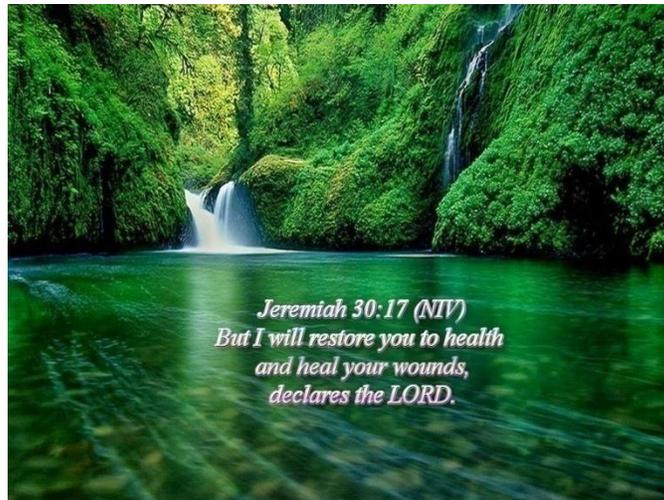
4. What has been there from the beginning of life? Gen. 1:2
5. How do you acknowledge the Spirit’ work (and Word/Way) in your life?



6. How do you submit to the Spirit’ work of bringing Christ and His Kingdom to bear within your circle of influence?
7. Nobody likes to tell people to repent. Telling others how thankful you are for different things in your life that God has done for you can could cause them to look towards God. Isn’t this a form of repentance?
8. What does Jesus teach about becoming fruitful in John 15:2?

Closing Prayer: Lord, thank You for all You’ve done. Your Spirit is moving many through grace by faith into Your kingdom. The work of repentance in Your people of faith is NOT aimed to make them feel bad or dirty. Rather, it’s aimed to join them daily to the faithful work of the Holy Spirit and to participate in the increase of Your Kingdom as “hearts and minds” are both renewed and pruned...

Lesson 3: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Responds to Christ-centered Prayer



Intro: The “Kingdom of Heaven” comes through hearts prayerfully attuned to God’s presence and purpose for His people. His Kingdom comes / flows through hearts lifting up Christ-centered prayers. Jesus said, "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22). His people keep their eyes good by focusing on the finished work of the cross.

Kingdom Prayer: “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” ² He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.” ³ Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’ (Luke 11:1-4, Matt. 6:9-13)”



Two high significance points about Kingdom Prayer...

A. At the center of our citizenship in (lifeline to) the “Kingdom of Heaven”, while we are in this world but NOT constrained by this world, is our union with God’s heart through prayer.

“Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples. (Luke 11:1)”

1. The Lord teaches us to focus our “hearts and minds” through prayer on:
 - a. the holy, unchanging nature of God and His will, His kingdom come (Luke 11:2);
 - b. the justification and sanctification for believers through the cross (Luke 11:4).

B. The object of our prayers when we keep our eyes on God’s Kingdom moves from ourselves to God’s will and loving others.

1. It moves us NOT only to pray for our own blessings but for the manifestation of His mercy (forgiveness) in our world (Luke 11:3-4).

These two high significance points remind us that “Mercy and grace (charity)” are the aroma of Christ that the body of Christ unleashes as they pray for God’s Kingdom come. Also, His kingdom come is a petition for the abundance (holiness/goodness) of God to be manifested from heaven to earth.



Kingdom Prayer connects believers to the way Jesus prayed...

The body of Christ, the “called out” is meant to be seen as the visible heart beat of God’s grace:

“You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. (Gal. 5:4-6)”

1. Lifting up prayers that express faith in our Heavenly Father’s calling through the Gospel; to be a people who declare the “Good News” of Christ as they trust in God’s “power and love”.
2. Remembering the Lord’s words “*However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith (a heartbeat) on the earth?* (Luke 18:8)” are NOT spoken as words of condemnation but as a call “to be the visible EKG of God’s faithfulness expressing itself through love (Gal. 5:6)”.
3. Approaching God with the knowledge that by “grace through faith” we have been yoked to the very heart of God through His first and full/perfect love (Rom. 5:8, 1 John 4:16-18).

As we pray the way Jesus prayed, we are aware that ALL our prayers are received because we are justified by grace NOT alienated from Christ by the law.



Kingdom Prayer leads believers as they co-labor with Christ...

We pray for guidance in all efforts to be joined with the will of God (His kingdom come); and for God’s “power and love” to move His Kingdom forward for the healing (restoration) of ALL nations/people by:

1. seeking first in prayer what pleases God; delighting in Him (Psalms 37:4);
2. reflecting the Lord’s heart by allowing our hearts to become royal vessels for healing, like the healing leaves to the nations spoken about in the “Kingdom of Heaven” (Rev. 22:1-2);
3. sharing uplifting/encouraging words for the brethren we intercede for; speaking life giving and prophetic words over their lives and efforts (1 Cor. 14:1,3);
4. Trusting God to provide for and bless our efforts.

Like we say grace with the same “anticipation and expectation” right before eating a thanksgiving meal; we should profess in prayer our “anticipation and expectation” of God’s next move in furthering the “Kingdom of Heaven” in our midst.

Closing Thought: God shares His “Kingdom of Heaven” with us through heartfelt prayers aligned with what His passion, His “power and love” changing (redeeming) lives one heart at a time.



Questions:

Intro:

1. What is the unchanging nature of God mentioned in the Lord's Prayer? What is God's unchanging purpose for His people in the Lord's Prayer?



2. What are Christ-centered prayers?
3. How often did Jesus pray to the Father? Is prayer our lifeline as well?
4. The eyes are windows to our souls. Talk about the windows of a home that allow lots of light to shine through them. What can we see through these windows? What about windows (eyes) that let the Son shine into the soul? What can we see through these windows? Life on the inside/out both earthly and heavenly. Shouldn't Kingdom prayers open the shades of our windows when they are drawn down? ☺



5. What is the first result of Kingdom centered prayer?
6. What (not who) do we hold up at the center of our Kingdom centered prayer?
7. Speak about the importance of knowing our identity in Christ as we pray...



8. What is the second result of Kingdom centered prayer?
9. How do you connect in prayer with what delights the Father?
10. How do you see yourself in Christ as a vessel that brings healing?

Closing Prayer: Lord, move us through your Spirit to lift up Christ-centered prayers which call upon Your “power and love” to reap the spoils of Your victory at the cross. We want to see Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...

Lesson 4: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Directs Those Who Seek God



Intro: The “Kingdom of Heaven” is like a compass which keeps God’s people on His good course. His Kingdom keeps and directs those who seek / receive His governance (Matt. 6:33). His people’s lives are like sailboats traversing the ocean. They keep their sails up to catch the wind (Holy Spirit) and always know their position with the Word (compass) in hand as they stay on God’s course.



Two high significance points about sailing with ‘Christ and His Kingdom’ ...

A. We seek / receive God’s leadership through His “Governor and Government”.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)”

1. A prince symbolizes ushering in a new reign. Christ as He was coronated at the cross of Calvary ushered in a new reign founded upon the “peace of Christ” for both our personal and community relationship building for God’s Kingdom come.
2. There will be no end to expansion of the peace of Christ on earth for His ambassadors (2nd Cor. 5:14-15) until He returns. Citizens of God’s Kingdom build relationships with others in the name of the Lord through God’s counsel, might and unending presence.
3. Our souls have been joined with the fulfillment of God’s Holy Word (Matt. 5:17) and; are kept by: the leadership of Christ (counsel), Christ’s victory (power) and the gift of eternal life. We continue to seek a greater faith to enable us stand upon this truth in all our situations.
4. Faith in the “Power and Love” of the Gospel brings forth demonstrations of the zeal of the Lord through signs and wonders as He establishes His reign from heaven to earth (Luke 17:21).

B. We are seeking God’s Course, Righteousness (Justice) for ALL in Christ:

”But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness... (Matt. 6:33)” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)”

1. The most direct "Way" (entrance) to the "temple mount" is through the east gate. Every morning the sun rises on the east gate. Similarly, every morning because of the finished work of Christ (New Temple) we can go directly to God through "faith in Christ". *Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. (John 10:7)"*
2. The "Holy Place" was a chamber between the "Holy of Holies" and the people outside which contained sacramental instruments. Similarly, Christ, God's instrument of Grace and His Gospel message intercedes for God's people unceasingly.
3. The "Holy of Holies" was hidden behind the veil but now through the blood of Jesus believers have eternal access to the presence and glory of God. The "Holy of Holies" contained the Ark of the Covenant and the Law given to Moses. Similarly, God's New Covenant, Living Word now resides in the hearts of God's children who are assuming their rightful place as image bearers of God's glory.

"At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (Matt. 27:51)"

"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2nd Cor. 4:3-4)"

There is no other course to follow because the Lord's course of righteousness (justice) for ALL has built an indestructible temple to rest (Sabbath) in. His course leads us to grow in the understanding of Christ, His Kingdom and His path for us. (*"I am the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6)"; "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (Rev. 21:22)"*)



Seeking after His Kingdom first we become less and He becomes greater...

The joy of the path we have been placed on leads us to:

1. Declare that the reign (name) of Christ is greater than our temporary existence. John the Baptist said *"Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease. ³¹ He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. (John 3:29-31)"*
2. Trust in the overarching power of His Kingdom (His Sovereign Word) to keep us in covenant with Him daily and meet our greatest need which is eternal life and fellowship with God. *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (1st Cor. 13:14)"*

The Kingdom course we seek will inevitably lead us to bear fruit. *"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. (John 15:3-4)"*



Walking in Kingdom faith leads us to seek/rest in His righteousness (justice)...

His eternal justice reigns over any temporary injustice as we:

1. Live by faith under God's "Kingdom of Heaven" justice and have faith that ALL world systems and powers are coming (through the redemption of the cross) under His authority. Our role in this is to be His visible temple on earth, telling others about His righteousness and justice as we march to a different drumbeat than the world.
2. Deflect the world's rejection of Christ and the personal disappointments of living in this world (darkness) as His course for us shines His Kingdom light through us into the world.

"You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. (Isaiah 43:10)

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2nd Cor. 5:20)"

As Christ's ambassadors, the Lord makes His appeal through us to those we come into contact with. Often, we're around strangers and hearts that are far from God. We remember how Jesus took us by the hand and led us through His gate of righteousness as we interact with others in "truth and love".

Closing Thought: Being the temple of the Lord on earth is God's children embedded in normal life experiences like breathing, bathing and eating. It's living each day doing normal stuff with the Lord in the refuge of His "way, truth and life" (wind in our sails and compass in hand).



Questions:

Intro:

1. What does Eph. 2:8 tell us about the people who live in the "Kingdom of Heaven"?
2. How do you climb onboard His boat of grace as you start each day?



3. What four high level promises of God's Word are we seeking for ourselves and others as we seek after the "Kingdom of Heaven"?
4. You're walking with Jesus going to the temple in Jerusalem. Speak about the three places you walk through/into as you enter the gate, the holy place and the holy of holies.



5. Do you speak the truth about your position in Christ over yourself daily? How?
6. Do you fall on the truth when your day gets tough?



7. Do you see Jesus walking with you during the day?
8. How do you express His Kingdom presence with you during the day?

Closing Prayer: Lord, move us through your “Spirit and Sovereign Word” to seek after Your Kingdom and Your righteousness. Connect our hearts with the zeal that You possess for seeing the things of God, His Kingdom take hold of the hearts of ALL people...

Lesson 5: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Pairing of Blessings and Revelation



Intro: The “Kingdom of Heaven” nourishes our lives and speaks to our hearts through the repetitive unspoken language of “love and truth”, Spirit. This interaction can be compared to the constant care that a mother gives to their infant child each day over a 24 hour period. The observer comes to see through this care, the beauty of the bond (relationship) between mother and child. Our Lord received the nurture of an earthly mother. Through blessings and revelation the Kingdom, the “body of Christ” receives a similar nurturing like a mother’s “love and instruction” shared with her child. God’s nurture, “blessings and revelation” reinforce the Kingdom “way, truth and life” of Christ to us.



Three highly significant ways God nurtures His people through the pairing of “blessings and revelation” ...

A. Through accessing and receiving Father’s blessings directly from His heart:

1. The beatitudes of Christ teach us about being joined to Father’s heart and His blessings flow:

- a. *Matt. 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* [Blessed are those who see themselves bankrupt without God’s promise (Truth/Will active in their lives), they shall receive His kingdom promise.]
- b. *Matt. 5:4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”* [Blessed are those who are struggling with injustice in this world, they shall receive the comfort of the Holy Spirit.]
- c. *Matt. 5:5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”* [Blessed are those who are gentle and kind as they live each day, they shall inherit the finished work of Christ (a new, redeemed world).]
- d. *Matt. 5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”* [Blessed are those who seek God’s justice found only in the righteousness of Christ. His righteousness will fill these souls with the “Spirit and Truth” of the one, true, holy God.]
- e. *Matt. 5:7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”* [Blessed are those who show mercy, for God will show them mercy.]

- f. *Matt. 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” [Blessed are those who surrender to the justifying / sanctifying work of the blood of Jesus, for they will see God.]*
- g. *Matt. 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” [Blessed are those who co-labor in the “peace of Christ”, for they are the family of God and ministers of reconciliation.]*
- h. *Matt. 5:10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” [Blessed are those who experience all kinds of persecution because of the righteousness of Christ that resides within them, for they have been marked as “Property of God”.]*
- i. *Matt. 5:11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.” [Blessed are those who aren’t ashamed of the name of Jesus, for the “Great I Am” is with them.]*

Father’s heart leads us to be blessed and nurtured by His “love and truth”. *“Rejoice and be glad, because great is our reward in heaven...be the salt and light of the world. (Matt.5:12-14)”*

B. Through accessing and receiving Father’s blessings through the “love of Christ”:

1. Zoe (Holy) Life has been demonstrated to us through the “love of Christ”. We see Father’s love through the Lord’s life centered (rooted) in Father’s love...

- a. Love defines greatness: *“³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing (1st Cor. 13:3)”*
- b. *There is a great chasm between our love and the “love of Christ”:*
 - ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.*
 - ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs.*
 - ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.*
 - ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*
 - ⁸ Love never fails. (1st Cor. 13:4-8)”*

2. The Spirit of the “love of Christ” reigns in the life of believers as they walk in the “love of Christ”:

- a. This is the good race laid before God’s family that He calls us to join Him in;
- b. The “Spirit of Love” rejoices in the truth of God’s holy life given to us at the cross;
- c. In the Son that Father sent to us full of “grace and truth” we possess the victory, a love that never fails because it’s leading us to eternal life.

C. Through being an open door, gate or portal for God’s Kingdom to come:

1. Through the freedom given us by “faith in Christ (Living Word)” which leads us to walk in God’s grace rather than under the law so that the Lord may bear much fruit through us. What does the fruit of freedom look like? *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Gal. 5:22-23)”*

2. Through the spring of abundant life within us which leads us to give freely what we have received freely (Matt. 10:8). *“But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:14)”*

3. Through our connection to the relentless momentum of the finished work of the cross washing over hearts and flowing through to bring God’s Kingdom “blessings and revelations” (grace and truth).



Seeing ourselves clothed in Christ...

The wedding clothes God’s children will wear for the return of His Son are adorned with:

1. All will know His deep love for them!

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)”

2. All will trust in His good plan for them!

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[i] have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)”

Seeing ourselves dressed in royal garbs adorned with the above has a tremendous impact on how we receive both physical and spiritual (truth) blessings from the Lord. Christ personally instructs us (1st John 2:27) and focuses us on His “Kingdom of Heaven” calling for our lives in Him.



Seeing God’s “blessings and revelations” change us and move us to love others...

Faith expressing itself in love looks like this:

1. The Lord has provided a list of services that can easily identify those (His sheep) who are living as His Kingdom vessels from the inside-out.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All 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. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴“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. ³⁵For 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, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”

2. The inward work of the Holy Spirit to reveal the goodness of God constantly tugs on the hearts of His children to share His love with others in both “word and deed”.

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ (Matt. 25:31-40)”

Closing Thought: As we connect His blessings with His revelations to us, pertaining to His life (Spirit and Truth) within us, we both experience life the way it was meant to be experienced and gladly participate in being His Kingdom witnesses.



Questions:

Intro:

1. What draws the people of God together who live in the “Kingdom of Heaven”?
2. Can you see the nurturing work of “grace and truth” in the “Kingdom of Heaven” through God’s Blessings and Revelations? How?



3. What three main components are emphasized as first importance and coming from Father’s heart?
4. How do you interpret the be-attitudes presented above?
5. Is it true that letting the “love of Christ” flow through us is life-changing? Talk about lessons you have learned about God’s love that “protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres” within us.
6. What are the blessings of the Spirit that have come from Father’s heart to ours?



7. Share one story of how God revealed His love to you through His provision (blessings)?
8. Share one story of how God revealed His will (Kingdom come) at work in your life?



9. Share one story of how the Lord's life is being poured through your life?

10. Was there a time when you were unwilling to share? What changed you?

Closing Prayer: Lord, thank You for your holy nurture to us through "Blessings and Revelations" that confirms to us Your love and commitment to Your people. Your very best comes to us from the center of Your heart. Help us to submit our lives to the work of Your Kingdom so that what You are nurturing us with might be shared with others...

Lesson 6: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Light Shining in Lamps & Neon-Signs



Intro: The coming “Kingdom of Heaven” rests upon the shoulders of those who rest in the righteousness of Christ. Those who serve in God’s Kingdom have been set free through His perfection and commissioned (anointed) to look for the movement of God’s “Zoë (holy life)”. Self-righteousness gained by following the Law (Gal. 5:23) is secondary to the work of the righteousness of Christ. God’s Kingdom brings His “forgiveness and righteousness” to bear through those who have intimate knowledge of Christ (Jere. 31:34). Their freedom in Christ (Gal. 5:1), personal relationship with Christ has removed the yoke of this world so they might shine the “Light of Christ” into the world.



A chivalry that shines the “Light of Christ” both inside / outside His Kingdom...

We demonstrate the Lord’s code for living of “loving God and others” by:

A. Remaining plugged into His Light:

1. We shine His consistent light.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)”

2. We adhere consistently to His code of “loving God and loving others”.

“But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one (Matt. 5:37).”

3. We have confidence in the finished work of Christ (His righteousness) and submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to “love God and others”.

Note: This is what a knight in Christ receives as they kneel before the King and are commissioned.

B. Following the movement of His Light:

1. Knowing that Father is always at work. Jesus said in John 5:17 *“My Father is always working”.*

2. Knowing Father’s heart. *“Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! (Isaiah 30:18)”*

3. Knowing the drum beat we are called to follow. *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)”*

Note: The work of redemption, ministry of reconciliation never stops like the sun which is always shining on some part of the world as it spins. Knowing this, a warrior in Christ is cautioned NOT to possess a compartmental faith life because God is always shining His light into darkness.

C. Refusing to hide our lamp under a table:

1. Being united through humility. *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. (Phil 2:1-2)”*

2. Doing unto others what you would have others do unto you. *“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)”*

The chivalry of Christ can easily be defined as “doing what pleases God”. The Old Testament details to us how to please God in the Ten Commandments. Jesus summarized these commandments in the New Testament with one commandment: “love God and others”.



Seeing ourselves as being the “salt and light” of the earth...

We remain salty through:

1. God’s New Covenant in Christ; we see ourselves as eternally protected and children of God. This opens our eyes to all kinds of ways His “forgiveness and righteousness” can be expressed.

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love (1st John 4:18).”

“The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3)”

2. Putting our personal relationship with God in Christ first; we see ourselves living in His abundance.

“A person can receive only what is given them from heaven (John 3:27).”

“Freely you have received; freely give. (Matt. 10:8)”

3. Seeing ourselves as being windblown as we approach being “salt and light”.

“when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Matt. 6:3)”

Note: Seeing ourselves in His perfect love and equipped from heaven (armed with the Gospel and dangerous because of its scandalous message) is a life changing revelation.



We demonstrate grace to others out of the abundance of His “salt and light”...

God’s grace to us flows like a river through us to others as:

1. We no longer operate from a perspective that our lives are temporary or powerless. Our “new life” in Christ gives us a new “Kingdom of Heaven” perspective of the abundant life, resources and possibilities (power) found in God’s grace.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2nd Cor. 5:17)”

Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. (Acts 3:6)”

2. We allow the Spirit of Christ (His Truth and Love) to draw out of us eternal value greater than our temporary gains (building up an eternal inheritance that will never spoil, fade or perish).

“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.’ (Matt. 25:34)”

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials (1st Peter 1:3-6)”

Note: The righteousness of Christ has set us free from sin and the setbacks of this life. It propels us to love Jesus, the way He loved the Father and to bring God glory. We do this first and foremost by radiating the “love of Christ”.

Closing Thought: God’s Kingdom servants function like lamps and neon-signs plugged into unbreakable, unending power supplies. They are powered by the “love of Christ” and display the “love of Christ”. The righteousness of Christ brings God’s children into the fellowship of “being loved and becoming love” against all odds (the distractions of this world and trappings of sin).



Questions:

Intro:

1. How does the “Righteousness of Christ” impact our faith lives?



2. What is the Light of the World? Is Christ Holy Life?
3. How do you see yourself plugged into the Light, Holy Life of Christ?
4. How do you see His light shining through you?



5. What is the eternal source of our ability to be “salt and light”?
6. What is the eternal power behind being “salt and light”?



7. Describe the change of perspective God wants His people to have as they come to the life changing revelation of being a new creation in Christ living in this world?
8. How are you receiving the infusion of God’s love to be “salt and light” to your surroundings?

Closing Prayer: Lord, thank You for your righteousness which sets me free from proving my worthiness to You and this world. In Christ, I am a gift from God to the living. Help me to walk out what this means in humility and love...

Lesson 7: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Proclamation of Truth



Intro: The marvelous “light of Christ (Living Word)” has come into the world. Followers of Christ carry this Light (Truth). The “Kingdom of Heaven” is seen as the fulfillment of Scripture written upon and shared through the hearts of believers. His resurrection guarantees us that there is no darkness in this world that can overcome His Light, His “Living Word” placed within believers. It is a fact that will never escape (fail) God’s people, even during our weakest moments. Therefore, God’s people now proclaim: “Death has been swallowed up in victory (1st Cor. 15:54)” as they shine this truth like a floodlight into the greatest depths of darkness in this world.



His “gift of eternal life” causes us to no longer regard others from a worldly point of view...

A. His Truth (Message of Reconciliation) overcomes ALL sin:

1. *“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2nd Cor. 5:16-19)”*

B. His Truth is a “life changing message” we’ve received and now invite others to receive:

1. *“He will swallow up death forever. (Isaiah 25:8)”;*

“I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. (John 8:51)” “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)”

C. We understand this heavenly message of the cross is scandalous:

1. *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.⁶ After that*

He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. (1st Cor. 15:3-6)"

Some who hear the message of the Gospel are looking for more wisdom. Others are seeking more power through being more spiritual. The message we've been given is Christ alone and the finished work of the cross. Our lifelong message (a Gospel of faith) points to the fact that we are bankrupt without Christ and only through God (John 8:58) are all things possible. Therefore, we are NOT ignorant of the reason why some reject the message although in it we see the goodness of God (and unlimited Heavenly wisdom and power).



Seeing the Truth (Gospel) we are carrying as unstoppable...

Emboldens us as we realize that:

1. Even unbelievers like the Pharisees have given testimony to the fact that you can't stop God.

"Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail.³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God. (Act 5:38-39)"

2. This life we live is from God and NOT earth; our life is based upon God's faithfulness to the Truth (Living Word).

"If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself. (2nd Tim. 2:13)"

3. The Testimony of Christ we share rests firmly upon the resurrection and empty tomb.

"Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³ Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. ⁵ Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' (Luke 24:1-7)"



Taking the Gospel Truth to the ends of the earth...

Expecting the Gospel to produce fruit as we:

1. First seeking regular fellowship gathered around the Truth.

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them. (Matt. 18:20)"

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)"

2. Tell others about the finished work and fellowship available through the blood of Jesus.

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1st John 1:5-7)”

3. Follow the Lord’s instructions such as these for sharing the Truth with Jew and Gentile”

a. share His message in His power and freedom (mercy);

“As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy and drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. (Matt. 10:7-8)”

b. share His message in the name of Christ and invite ALL to have eternal fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (in Spirit and Truth).

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:18-20)”

4. Live to certify the Truth.

“Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. ³⁴ For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God for God, gives the Spirit without limit. (John 3:33-34)

We want our lives to give a similar testimony as John the Baptist: *“Therefore this joy of mine is complete. He must become greater; I must become less. ³¹ The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. (John 3:30-31)”* John the Baptist did not live only to share prophetic words but he lived for the Truth.

Closing Thought: Our Redeemer lives and reigns forever! Though many reject and ignore the outcome of the cross; it’s message is the stone that will trip up unbelievers and fall on them if they don’t look (turn) to the Father through His Son. We who have received the gift of eternal life freely (by grace through faith) live to tell others about the message we have received. We do this with humility (in the Holy Spirit) as we’re led to share the Truth in love.



Questions:

Intro:

1. What is the marvelous light of the “Gospel Truth” we reflect like a prism?



2. What is the life changing perspective of the “Gospel Message” which changes how we view others?
3. Do you see yourself at times shining a flashlight for Christ? What is it about the message that makes it a much more powerful light?
4. Why is the message scandalous to those seeking wisdom and power?



5. How do we avoid putting ourselves in the position of fighting against an unmovable force?
6. What is the one thing God will NOT do?
7. What is the greatest argument (truth) to defend our faith in Christ?



8. You can't share what you don't have (God with us). How do we grow in the Truth, fulfilled Word best? Why community?
9. How relevant should the finished work and blood of Christ be to what we are sharing?
10. What do Jesus' instructions tell us we have access to as we share the Truth?
11. How does possessing eternal life embolden us to certify the message of the cross?

Closing Prayer: Lord, thank You for your Gospel Truth which shines both in and through me. In You, I have everything I need to be victorious over sin and death. You have given me “new life” to be a witness to the truthfulness of Your Gospel message. Take my “thoughts, words and deeds” and use them to bring glory to Your Holy Name...

Lesson 8: The “Kingdom of Heaven” Inheritance of Eternal, Unspeakable Joy



Intro: The resurrection of Christ has ushered in the new reality of eternal life bubbling forth and being shared as “Living Water” with all people in every nation (John 4:14). Citizens of the “Kingdom of Heaven” have been awakened to the revelation of “Christ and His resurrection”. The Lord’s Kingdom inheritance brings forth even now an eternal (supernatural) and unspeakable joy through His Spirit. When Christ returns, all the redeemed will be joyfully partaking in His inheritance, the fullness of God in “truth and love”. Listen to John the Baptist’s words on the other side of Christ going to the cross “*Therefore this joy of mine is complete. (John 3:29)*” We should share in this joy John spoke about as we rest in the resurrection of Christ for our Lord is alive both above us and in us!



Learning to partake in God’s supernatural joy...

A. “Kingdom of Heaven” Fellowship in His Joy

1. *Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)”*

Certainly, when one thinks of heaven they would have no problem with the simple pleasure of enjoying choice food and sweet drinks. When we look to the joy of the Lord, not only do we get to enjoy God’s fellowship but we desire that others should enjoy what we are enjoying. Choice food and drink is joyous but a greater joy, the joy of the Lord gives us the most strength. *“In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”³² But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know. (John 4:31-32)”*

2. *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalm 16:11)”*

Scripture tells us that Jesus saw the Father’s joy set before Him as He went to the cross (Heb. 12:2). As we take pleasure in Father’s pleasure with His Son (Matt. 3:17), we partake in the joy of the Lord. Holy Spirit desires to bring us greater and greater revelation of God’s eternal pleasure of being with His children as we meditate upon Him (Psalm 37:4).

3. *“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

⁸ *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1st Peter 1:6-9)*

We greatly rejoice in the wounds (stripes) of Christ as we grow in the knowledge of the healing (restoration) that God has brought to His children (Isaiah 53:5). As our wounds in this life are joined with His, we see Him like Thomas did (John 20:27) and stop doubting. The maturity of our faith in the finished work of Christ draws us into the deeper waters of His inexpressible and glorious joy.



Drawing closer to His inexpressible and glorious joy...

As we realize God first chose to love us we drink from:

1. The joy of our salvation daily, the living water Christ offered to the Samaritan woman at the well.

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. (John 4:10)"

2. The Holy Spirit who satisfies our greatest thirst and brings us deeper revelations of God's truth which leads our souls to enjoy the life God brought us into like a good husband who gives His wife a good home. It leads us to make melodies in our hearts and sing songs which give thanks in all things for God.

"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:18-20)"

3. We believe (John 6:29) that our Lord has made us a spring of water welling up to eternal life. This spring of water can't be capped by sin or its wages.

"but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life. (John 4:14)"

In all things, we rest upon the One who produces our joy in the first place. The "joy of the Lord" is our supernatural strength. It isn't a joy we produce but it's a joy Holy Spirit truth joins us with. We shouldn't try to cap this spring but sometimes we do.



Bringing the joy of the Lord to others...

God has made His people to be an oasis of grace who:

1. Standing high in the Most High, leads God's children to proclaim that God has brought peace, good tidings and salvation (not judgment) to the world. Our willingness to stand upon the "new life" message we have been given, releases the joy of the Lord through us into our surroundings. We let the truth of standing high (via grace by faith) in the Most High bring His living water down from the mountain. We know that water doesn't run uphill but downhill as others try to rain on our victory parade (in Christ). Also, we're quick to shake the dust off our feet (Matt. 10:14).

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7)

2. Believe in the perfect work (of the love) of Christ on the cross and the power released from His perfect work. First, we see God's power at the Resurrection; then at Pentecost and finally in/through our lives. This mystery of the cross leads us to an unlimited inheritance of eternal, unspeakable joy.

"the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. (Col. 1:26-29)"

Joy is the vehicle our Lord has given us both to deliver the Gospel Truth and to cleave us to God's inheritance. Joy unending is experienced by ALL in the house of the Lord.

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:2-3)"

Closing Thought: "He is risen!" is the truth that propels us toward the "Kingdom of Heaven" inheritance of eternal, unspeakable joy. Life's disappointments and the sin of unbelief try to separate us from the reality of the inheritance God has for us. The greater our ability becomes to trust in the Lord, the more impossible it becomes to put a cap on God's supernatural joy which has been made available to us through the finished work of the cross. This was the joy set before Jesus as He gave His life for us. This was the joy that John the Baptist and other prophets of the Bible lived for. The finished work of Christ is the joy that so many saints have lived for on this side of the cross. God's greater inheritance of joyous, perfect, eternal union with Him is greater than any inheritance this temporary (fallen) world can offer.



Questions:

Intro:

1. What will eternal, unspeakable joy always be connected to?



2. What sorts of fellowship events are joyous (such as a wedding banquet)?
3. Why would eternal fellowship with God's justice and pleasure be so joyous?
4. How does the revelation of Christ reaching the depths of our soul and touching all our situations bring us joy?



5. Have you drank the "Living Water" Jesus offered to the Samaritan woman? Do you know for certain if you died today that you would go to heaven? If yes, Why?
6. Is drinking the truth of Christ suppose to lead us to joy or condemnation? Why? Who/what tries to separate us from the joy of the Lord? How much should we rest in the finished work of the cross?



7. Why is joy key to being able to share the Good News? Should evangelists be joyless?
8. There is a saying at Christmas time that if you're bad you will receive a brick of coal. However, the mystery of the cross is like the process that turns coal into diamonds. Does living with God's joy challenge us to live in the new reality that dead hearts (coal) is being transformed into eternal hearts for God (diamonds) every day? How do you see the joy of the Lord as God's key for us to use to access power and wisdom?

Closing Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your Gospel Truth and supernatural joy that strengthens me daily. In the finished work of the cross, I can find joy even in the midst of the greatest personal trials of this life. You have set before me an inheritance of eternal, unspeakable joy. I know this is real because I already see it working in my life now. Lead me to drink often from Your spring of unending joy as Your "Spirit and Truth" resides within me...

3 Closing Summary Thoughts for This Study

1. Where do we find/encounter the “Kingdom of Heaven”?

Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed,²¹ nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst. (Luke 17:20-21)”

*‘Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”
“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. (John 5:17, 19)’*

2. How do we enter the “Kingdom of Heaven”?

“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. (Isa. 45:22)”

“And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me,³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom (Luke 22:29-30)”

3. How do we walk with Jesus in the “Kingdom of Heaven”?

“The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:26-27)”

“But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him:⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did. (1st John 2:5-6)”

Christ and the “Kingdom of Heaven” (Of First Importance)

“Learning how Jesus and His passion, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’, are meant to be first in our hearts and lives (1st John 2:5-6)”



(Picture Note: The non-traditional wave menorah above represents the ‘Light of Christ’ and the new ‘Kingdom Way’ for God’s family of faith, ambassadors of “Christ and His Kingdom”. The leftmost higher candle represents Christ and the eight lower candles represent His teachings, His full counsel for ushering in His Kingdom, the new day.)

Kingdom Lights:

- ❖ The “Kingdom of Heaven” New Covenant Fulfilled in Christ
- ❖ The “Kingdom of Heaven” Is Near (Here)
- ❖ The “Kingdom of Heaven” Responds to Christ-centered Prayer
- ❖ The “Kingdom of Heaven” Directs Those Who Seek God
- ❖ The “Kingdom of Heaven” Pairing of Blessings and Revelation
- ❖ The “Kingdom of Heaven” Light Shining in “Lamps/Neon-Signs”
- ❖ The “Kingdom of Heaven” Proclamation of Truth
- ❖ The “Kingdom of Heaven” Inheritance of Eternal, Unspeakable Joy

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. (Matt. 6:22)”

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)”

Classroom Lesson 1: (Review Notes) New Covenant Fulfilled in Christ

Write different verse on board each day to introduce lesson:

Monday Verse: Jeremiah 31:3 (Everlasting Love)

Tuesday Verse: Jeremiah 31:6 (Invitation to God's Holy House)

Wednesday Verse: Jeremiah 31:8 (Joined with many from 4 corners of the world)

Thursday Verse: Jeremiah 31:17 (Hope for the future)

Friday Verse: Jeremiah 31:32-34 (Living Covenant)

Intro: The new "Kingdom of Heaven" way of Jesus was shared with humanity through God's "New Covenant", His eternal promise fulfilled in the "life, death and resurrection" of Christ. God's promise fulfilled has brought to believers: 1) an unbreakable covenant; 2) a Living Way (access through grace by faith) to holy life and 3) everlasting love (nurture) through the resurrected life of Christ!



Grace/Covenant Connection...

The four Gospels connect believers to the promises of the Old Testament books being fulfilled in the Testimony of Christ. The body of Christ has been connected to: "the words of the prophets", "the truth of Scripture", "all generations of God's people of faith" and God's "grace and mercy".

Without God's Word (promise) we are a spiritually broke people. Trusting in God's promise fulfilled in Christ leads us to have access to the fullness of God.



Personal Revelation...

Sin is condemned (judged/washed away) through the suffering of Christ (Romans 8:3) and judgment of the prince of this world (John 16:11)

God describes his covenant gift to us in the New Covenant prophecy found in Jeremiah 31:

One family; Consistent love; The Hope of Restoration; High Standing with God; The Joy of Undeserved Merit; A New Vineyard; An Open Door; Boldness; Freedom; Victory over Death; Abundance; Signs and Wonders; Future Hope; New Life; Eternal Righteousness; Unity; Refreshment; New Covenant; Void of Religious Works; **Renewed** Heart & Mind; Intimacy with God; Eternal Abode.



Spiritual Journey...

We look to God alone for salvation (Isaiah 45:22) and abide in His Living Word (John 15:4)

We share our lives so others may trust in God's New Covenant by speaking the truth in love both in word and deeds. We live our lives empowered by the Gospel (Romans 1:16).

Questions and Answers to Remember:

1. What is the greatest promise (gift) of the New Covenant to us? (Jeremiah 31:34, Romans 6:23)
2. Where is the new covenant written for God's people? (Jeremiah 31:33) How? (Ezekiel 36:26)

Classroom Lesson 2: (Review Notes) Near to Christ and His Kingdom

Write different verse on board each day to introduce lesson:

Monday Verse: Matthew 4:17 (Proclamation of God's Kingdom Come)

Tuesday Verse: Matthew 9:2 (Sins are forgiven)

Wednesday Verse: Isaiah 45:22 (People turning/looking to God)

Thursday Verse: 1 Peter 2:9 (His own special people who praise Him)

Friday Verse: Galatians 5:13-14 (Liberty to love one another)

Intro: The "Kingdom of Heaven" draws us into God's peace, His presence and eternal plan for our lives. God's Living Word (Christ) alive in us brings His love and power, Kingdom to bear in our lives and through our lives. Being forgiven and turning to God daily are the keys for walking near to Christ and His Kingdom!



Being Near to Christ and His Kingdom...

We embrace Christ and His Kingdom by looking towards and turning to God (repentance).

The believers call to repentance is a call to examine our hearts and motives in regards to being ministers of reconciliation.

We're looking and turning towards the "Triune Nature" of God being revealed in our midst:

- a. His Eternal Mind/Thoughts (God's Management/Sovereignty through His unchanging Word);
- b. His Eternal Way (God's Daily Operation in "grace and truth") and;
- c. His Eternal Fruit (The handling of the fruit/harvest of His "grace and truth").



Personal Revelation...

As we embrace Christ and His Kingdom, we receive personal revelation through:

- a. submitting our heart to being trained by His Word;
- b. operating in grace and truth;
- c. joining in the harvest of Kingdom fruit.



Spiritual Journey...

Believers look for opportunities to:

- a. Demonstrate our total dependence upon the "Power and Love" of the Gospel;
- b. Follow the teachings of Christ shared in the Gospels as He walked in "Spirit & Truth";
- c. Share freely what we received freely as God's benevolence flows through us;
- d. Expect to participate in the ongoing movement of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Questions and Answers to Remember:

1. When we draw close to God, we draw close to God's will. What is God's will? John 6:40
2. How do we stay close to God? 1 John 1:7

Classroom Lesson 3: (Review Notes) Responding to Christ-Centered Prayer

Write different verse on board each day to introduce lesson:

Monday Verse: Luke 11:1 (Jesus teaches us how to pray to God, even now)

Tuesday Verse: Luke 11:2 (We go to Heavenly Father, His Holiness and Kingdom for us)

Wednesday Verse: Luke 11:3 (We go to God for our daily needs)

Thursday Verse: Luke 11:4 (We go to God to be forgiven of sin and protected from sin)

Friday Verse: Luke 11:5 (We can go to God in prayer at any time, even when we sin)

Intro: The new “Kingdom of Heaven” now comes to earth through hearts that are drawn close through faith and Christ-centered prayer. Focusing on the goodness of God and His eternal Kingdom leads Christians to lift up redemption, the forgiveness of sin through the cross, over every heart and situation in this temporary life that we live in a sinful world.



Kingdom Prayer Connection...

The Lord Jesus has taught us: 1) how to pray to God; 2) to go to Heavenly Father, His Holiness and Kingdom in prayer; 3) to go to God for our daily needs; 4) to go to God to be forgiven of sin and protected from sin; and 5) to go to God in prayer at any time, even when we sin.

The Lord desires to lead us to pray for ourselves and others as we keep our eyes focused on what He is doing through His Word and Spirit.



Personal Revelation...

The body of Christ (church) is meant to be seen as the visible heart beat of God’s grace. This is accomplished through prayers that express faith in our Heavenly Father’s calling through the Gospel (Romans 1:1).

Believers approach God with the knowledge that by “grace through faith” we have been yoked to the very heart of God through His first and full/perfect love (Eph. 2:8, Rom. 5:8).



Spiritual Journey...

Kingdom Prayer leads believers to: 1) pray for their efforts to be joined with the will of God, to move His Kingdom forward and heal (restore) ALL people; 2) to seek first in prayer what pleases God; 3) to reflect the Lord’s heart by allowing our hearts to become royal vessels for His presence; 4) to lift up God’s Word over those we pray for and 5) to trust God to provide for and bless our faithful efforts.

We should pray in “anticipation and expectation” of God’s next move of furthering the “Kingdom of Heaven” in our midst.

Questions and Answers to Remember:

1. How do we know how and what to pray for? (Luke 11:1-4)
2. When and how often do we go to God in pray? (Luke 11:5-8)

Classroom Lesson 4: (Review Notes) Direction for those who Seek God

Write different verse on board each day to introduce lesson:

Monday Verse: Matthew 6:33 (To seek God's "Kingdom and Righteousness" first)

Tuesday Verse: Rev. 21:22 (To seek bringing glory to the Father through His Son)

Wednesday Verse: John 14:6 (To seek the Lord's Most Excellent Way in ALL things)

Thursday Verse: John 3:29-30 (To seek increasing our trust in God over self)

Friday Verse: John 15:3-4 (To seek abundant life from God's Living Word)

Intro: The sovereignty (authority and power) of the "Kingdom of Heaven" acts like a compass which guides the hearts of believers as they sail like a ship on an ocean. The compass receives its directions from the magnetism of God's heart as believers seek God's governance.



Kingdom GPS Connection...

We seek / receive God's leadership through His "Governor and Government":

The Christ has ushered in a new reign. He intercedes for us as "Prince of Peace" through the Cross and "King of Kings" through the Resurrection.

There will be no end to expansion of the peace of Christ on earth for His ambassadors (2nd Cor. 5:14-15) until He returns. Citizens of God's Kingdom build relationships with others in the name of the Lord through God's counsel, might and unending presence.

Believers have been joined with the fulfillment of God's Holy Word (Matt. 5:17) and; are kept by: the leadership of Christ (counsel), Christ's victory (power) and the gift of eternal life (love).

Faith in the "Power and Love" of the Gospel brings forth demonstrations of the zeal of the Lord through signs and wonders as He establishes His reign from heaven to earth (Luke 17:21).

We seek God's Course, Righteousness (Justice) for ALL in Christ, His Way, Truth and Life.

There is no other course to follow because the Lord's course of righteousness (justice) for ALL has built an indestructible temple (Sabbath) to rest in.



Personal Revelation...

The joy of the path we have been placed on leads us to:

Declare that the reign (name) of Christ is greater than our temporary lives in this world.

Trust in the overarching power of His Kingdom (His Sovereign Word) to keep us in covenant with Him daily and meet our greatest need which is eternal life and fellowship with God.

The Kingdom course we seek inevitably leads us to bear fruit for eternity.



Spiritual Journey...

His eternal justice reigns over any temporary injustice as we:

Live by faith under God's "Kingdom of Heaven" justice and have faith that ALL world systems and powers are coming (through the redemption of the cross) under His authority. Our role in this is to be His visible temple on earth, telling others about His righteousness and justice as we march to a different drumbeat than the world.

Deflect the world's rejection of Christ and the personal disappointments of living in this world (darkness) as His course for us shines His Kingdom light through us into the world.

As Christ's ambassadors, the Lord makes His appeal through us to those we come into contact with. Often, we're around strangers and hearts that are far from God. We remember how Jesus took us by the hand and led us through His gate of righteousness as we interact with others in "truth and love".

Questions and Answers to Remember:

1. Has Jesus saved you? What has He saved you for? (2nd Cor. 5:14-15)
2. How does the Lord keep us on course? (John 4:23)
3. Do you look at your life as one that can bear eternal fruit? What does Jesus say about this? (John 15:8)

Classroom Lesson 5: (Review Notes) Pairing of Blessings and Revelation

Write different verse on board each day to introduce lesson:

Monday Verse: Matthew 5:3 (Blessed are the poor in spirit...)

Tuesday Verse: Matthew 5:13-14 (You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world)

Wednesday Verse: 1st Cor. 13:3 (If I do not have love, I gain nothing)

Thursday Verse: Matt. 10:7 (All blessings and revelation proclaim God's Kingdom come)

Friday Verse: Gen. 22:14 (God gave us life and provides for our body and soul)

Intro: God's "Kingdom of Heaven" brings nourishment for the body and revelation for our "hearts and minds" as our Good Shepherd repeatedly leads us to His daily bread. As God blesses our bodies, He teaches our "hearts and minds" to be vessels of His love.



3 significant ways God nurtures His people as He pairs "blessings and revelation"

1. As we approach Father's provision with our deep, heart-felt needs for living in His Kingdom:

- a. *Matt. 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*
- b. *Matt. 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted"*
- c. *Matt. 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."*
- d. *Matt. 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."*
- e. *Matt. 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."*
- f. *Matt. 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."*
- g. *Matt. 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God"*
- h. *Matt. 5:10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*
- i. *Matt. 5:11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."*

2. As we approach Father's provision through the "love of Christ":

- a. Always looking towards the love God demonstrated through His Son on the cross
- b. Remembering: *"³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing (1st Cor. 13:3)"*
- c. Relying upon God's perfect love

3. As we approach Father's provision through The Spirit given to believers:

- a. God's Spirit has joined us to God's family
- b. God's Spirit causes our souls to rejoice in the Gospel Truth
- c. God's Spirit connects us to an abundance of the Lord's "grace and truth" as we take hold of the victory of the cross and God's gift of eternal life
- d. God's Spirit gives us "fruit and gifts" that lead us to eternal rewards



Personal Revelation...

1. Clothed in Christ with the wedding clothes God's children will wear for the return of His Son and His wedding celebration.

2. His provision reveals to us His deep love for us despite the sin of this world we live in.
3. All will obtain an abiding trust in God's good plan for His family.

Having the spiritual maturity to see ourselves dressed in royal garbs adorned with the family emblem of Christ, has a tremendous impact on how we receive both physical and spiritual (truth) blessings from the Lord. Christ personally instructs us (1st John 2:27) and focuses us on His "Kingdom of Heaven" calling for our lives in Him.



Spiritual Journey...

Seeing God's "blessings and revelations" changes us and moves us to love others:

1. As we let our "faith in Christ" express itself in love.

Examples: feeding the hungry, providing water for the thirsty, providing shelter for the homeless, providing clothes for others, caring for the sick and visiting those who are in any type of prison.

2. As we let the inward work of the Holy Spirit who reveals the goodness of God and constantly tugs on the hearts spontaneously express His love for others in both "word and deed".

Questions and Answers to Remember:

1. How do we approach God? Give an example of each of the 3 significant ways.
2. How does the Lord clothe us so that we will be prepared for heaven?
3. When God provides us with a blessing does His blessing speak to our hearts? What might it say to our hearts? God provides, God hears us, God loves us, God wants us to love others...

Classroom Lesson 6: (Review Notes) Light Shining in Lamps & Neon-Signs

Write different verse on board each day to introduce lesson:

Monday Verse: John 8:12 (Christ is the Light of the World)

Tuesday Verse: Matthew 12:29-31 (He shines a Light on “how to live”)

Wednesday Verse: James 1:22 (He shines a Light on “what obedience looks like”)

Thursday Verse: John 5:17 (He shines a Light on “God’s labor of love”)

Friday Verse: Micah 6:8 (He shines a Light on “what is good in God’s sight”)

Intro: God’s “Kingdom of Heaven” rests upon the shoulder of Christ and the shoulders (the body of Christ) of those who are resting in the righteousness of Christ. Truly, it is the righteousness of Christ that is shining a bright light in this fallen world.



Shining a light on God’s spiritual code of chivalry...

A. His Truth (Message of Reconciliation) overcoming ALL sin:

2. *“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2nd Cor. 5:16-19)”*

B. His Truth “changing lives” through the Gospel we’ve received and now share with others:

2. *“He will swallow up death forever. (Isaiah 25:8)”;*

“I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. (John 8:51)” “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)”

C. We understand His heavenly message of the cross is scandalous:

1. *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. (1st Cor. 15:3-6)”*

Some who hear the message of the Gospel are looking for more wisdom. Others are seeking more power through being more spiritual. The message we’ve been given is Christ alone and the finished work of the cross. Our lifelong message (a Gospel of faith) points to the fact that we are bankrupt without Christ and only through God (John 8:58) are all things possible. Therefore, we are NOT ignorant of the reason why some reject the message although in it we see the goodness of God (and unlimited Heavenly wisdom and power).



Personal Revelation...

Seeing the Truth (Gospel) we are carrying as unstoppable emboldens us as we realize that:

1. Even unbelievers like the Pharisees have given testimony to the fact that you can't stop God.

"Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail.³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God. (Act 5:38-39)"

2. This life we live is from God and NOT earth; our life is based upon God's faithfulness to the Truth (Living Word).

"If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself. (2nd Tim. 2:13)"

3. The Testimony of Christ we share rests firmly upon the resurrection and empty tomb.

"Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³ Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. ⁵ Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' (Luke 24:1-7)"



Spiritual Journey...

Expecting the Gospel to produce fruit we:

1. First seek regular fellowship gathered around the Truth.

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them. (Matt. 18:20)"

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)"

2. Tell others about the finished work and fellowship available through the blood of Jesus.

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1st John 1:5-7)"

3. Follow the Lord's instructions such as these for sharing the Truth with Jew and Gentile"

"As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy and drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. (Matt. 10:7-8)"

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:18-20)"

4. Live to certify the Truth.

“Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. ³⁴ For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God for God, gives the Spirit without limit. (John 3:33-34)

Questions and Answers to Remember:

1. On whose shoulders does God’s Light (righteousness) now rest upon?
2. Have you seen God’s message come with righteousness and power into your life? others?
3. How do we tell others about the Lord? Do we begin by showing others that we live by His truth? What is the greatest way to exemplify God’s truth? Live for His Kingdom!