

Watch

Refer to this view guide as you watch video session 2.

Kingdom Disciple

A Christian who is progressively participating in the process of learning what it is to live all of life under the lordship, rulership, kingship of Jesus Christ

The primary concern that you should have as a kingdom disciple is to seek ye first the kingdom.

From Genesis to Revelation, the one subject of the Bible is the glory of God through the advancement of His kingdom.

The church would be the new mechanism through which God would express His kingdom rule in history until such time He renewed it with His people Israel.

You and I are God's official representatives to represent His presence, His person, and His authority in history.

Righteousness is the standards by which the kingdom operates, the rules by which the kingdom works.

There are two answers to every question—God's answer and everybody else's—and everybody else is wrong when they disagree with God.

God must be first in your priorities; first in your passions; and most important, first in your decisions.

Only as a kingdom disciple—a visible, verbal, full-time representative of Jesus Christ—can you expect to receive all that God has determined for you to have, because you're operating under His rule.

God says, "If you operate in My kingdom, under My rule, according to My standards, I will cover you because you put Me first."

Discuss the video with your group, using these questions.

What did Dr. Evans say is the one subject of the Bible? Where else in Scripture do we see this subject reflected?

If God's rule is the master key to the kingdom, what are we unable to access if we don't take hold of this key?

The church is God's plan to assert His kingdom rule in the world. How is this group contributing to this mission?

Dr. Evans said, "You and I are living in a day when the rules are changing at warp speed." Why should we continue to seek God first when our culture is dismissing His standard of righteousness?

What happens when we choose the rules of this world instead of the standards that emanate from God?

The key word in Matthew 6:33 is first. Why is it so tempting for us to make God second in our priorities? Who or what do you elevate to the level of first priority?

Jesus said that once God is first, all other things will be added to you. How does placing God first allow us to see everything else in our lives clearly?

Ask someone to read Matthew 6:25-34. Why does worry creep into our lives when we don't make God and His kingdom our primary concern? What concerns are you experiencing that would go away if you sought God's kingdom above everything else?

Dr. Evans stated that when he was young, though his family didn't have a lot, he didn't worry because he knew his daddy would provide. Most of the time when we make something other than God a priority, it's because we feel that God won't give us something we need. What are you afraid to trust God to provide?

Kingdom Concerns

As we continue our journey through the depths, clefts, and mountaintops that make up God's kingdom, let's broaden our road map by looking more deeply at this overarching concept of God's kingdom. The Greek word the Bible uses for *kingdom* means "rule" or "authority." Thus, when we talk about a kingdom, we're talking first about a king or a ruler. We're talking about someone who's in charge.

If there's a ruler, there also have to be "rulees," or kingdom subjects. In addition, a kingdom includes a realm—a domain over which the king rules. Finally, if there are a ruler, rulees, and a realm, there also have to be kingdom regulations—guidelines that govern the relationship between the ruler and the subjects. These are necessary so that the rulees will know whether they're doing what the ruler wants them to do.

God's kingdom includes all of these elements. He's the absolute Ruler of His domain, which encompasses all of creation. Everything God rules, He runs—even when it doesn't look as if He's running it. Even when life looks as if it's out of control, God is running its out-of-controlness.

God's kingdom also has rulees. Colossians 1:13 says everybody who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior has been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, your allegiance has changed. You no longer align yourself with Satan but with Christ. This week let's look at what your primary concern ought to be as Christ's kingdom disciple.

Day 1

First Things First

As we begin our second week of study together, let's refresh our minds on what a kingdom disciple is. A kingdom disciple is a believer who participates in the spiritual-development process of progressively learning to live all of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ. To live all of life under Christ assumes that you know and apply what Christ desires for you to do in life.

Read Matthew 6:33. What should our primary concern be as a kingdom disciple?

How do we "seek first His kingdom" in everyday, practical terms?

What would change about the way you make decisions if seeking first the kingdom and God's righteousness became the primary concern of your life?

When is a time you sought God's kingdom, His perspective, and His desires first in your life and experienced deliverance, provision, or peace as a result? What did you learn from this experience?

To live life to its fullest and to accomplish and experience all God has created you to do, you must place God and His kingdom first. God's rule isn't to be one among many. God can't be second; He must be first. The problem for most of us is that God is merely in the vicinity of our lives; He isn't first in our lives.

I often hear people tell me they just don't have enough time for God. What they're really telling me is God isn't in first place in their lives, because people always make time for what matters most. Recall a time when you were dating someone you deeply loved. Love was new, and you couldn't get that person off your mind. The number of hours in your day didn't increase, and the number of minutes in an hour didn't increase. And yet for some reason you were able to find the time necessary to show your dedication and devotion to the person you loved.

We always have enough time for what we prioritize in our lives. Lack of discipleship isn't caused by a lack of time. Lack of discipleship is caused by a failure to prioritize our time

Not seeking the kingdom as our primary concern has led to a diminishing experience of God. Yet the rule, blessings, guidance, and provisions of heaven can be fully realized only as God's kingdom standards are prioritized by His disciples. God has made it perfectly clear throughout Scripture that His rightful place in our lives is first.

Read Proverbs 3:9. What priority do you give God in your finances?

Read Revelation 2:4. What did Jesus say the church had done? What causes us to consider other loves more valuable than Jesus?

Read Colossians 1:18. Christ is to have what place over what?

Jesus Christ is to have first place over everything, including our thoughts, actions, decisions, time, and talents. This is His rightful place in our lives. Not only that, but Jesus said we're to seek first God and His kingdom above all else. A kingdom disciple does nothing less than that.

When you don't revere God as the supreme Ruler, His kingdom and its benefits aren't yours. Matthew 6:33 states that when you put God and His kingdom rule first, then "all these things" will be given to you. All what things? Everything you need and everything that's necessary for you to fully live out your destiny and purpose.

That doesn't mean you won't have problems or challenges in life. It means you'll be well equipped to overcome or persevere through those problems and challenges when all of life is aligned under God's authority and His rule. A corollary to this principle is that when you don't put God first, you miss out on all of the benefits and blessings of the King and His kingdom.

When a struggle or challenge arises, where's the first place you look for help? What does this choice communicate about your dependence on God?

Why is it important to trust God first with your struggles and challenges?

What do we miss in our relationship with the Lord when we try to solve our problems without consulting Him?

If you're a parent, maybe you recall saying these words to your children: "Why didn't you talk to me first? I wish you would talk to me first." Often parents point out that their children could have avoided mistakes or problems in life if they had simply sought and followed their advice as parents first. While this principle holds true in parenting, it holds even more true with God. Many people wonder why they aren't hearing from God or experiencing His abiding presence and victory in their lives. God's answer to their question is simply "Because you come to Me last. In fact, you first go to the world—a system that leaves Me out. And then you come to Me only when the world's advice doesn't help."

The key to success as a kingdom disciple is found in the word first. It's in the prioritization of the rule of God over every area of life where the power for kingdom living is found.

What action communicate that God is first in our lives?

How do spiritual disciplines like Bible study and prayer create dependency and on God and priority in our relationship with Him?

Prayer

Loving Heavenly Father, give me a heart that instinctively places You first. Ignite a passion in my soul to seek You above all else. Draw near to me as I draw near to You so that I can discern Your presence, guidance, and power working in and through me. Show me the value of putting You first as I commit myself to You as Your disciple. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 2

Worry No Longer

One day a man was rushing to catch his plane at the airport because he was late. Worried that he might miss his flight, he started weaving in and out of the crowds of people walking to their gates with moves that would make an NFL running back proud. He bumped into a man dressed in a flight uniform and briefly paused to say he was sorry. The man asked him why he was rushing, and he told him that he was trying to catch his flight. “Where are you going?” the man in the flight uniform asked.

“I’m going to Austin,” he replied.

“Well, then, relax and stop worrying,” the man said with a smile. “I’m the pilot, and that plane won’t go anywhere without me.”

Immediately the man who had been running through the airport worried about missing his flight was able to slow down and rest because he knew where the pilot was. Similarly, knowing where God is located—knowing what He promises when you look to Him first—will reduce your anxiety, frustration, and irritation on all levels.

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus told us that when we put God first as His kingdom disciple, He will take care of everything else. That truth alone ought to be enough motivation to obey this command.

The context of Matthew 6:33 reveals a lot about the benefits of its promise. Identify the common word that’s used in the following verses.

Matthew 6:25

Matthew 6:27

Matthew 6:28

Matthew 6:31

Matthew 6:34

How can first seeking God alleviate worry in a person's life?

In what way does faith affect the amount of worry a person experiences?

In yesterday's lesson we looked at the importance of putting God first in our thoughts, actions, and lives. We considered God's desire for us to place Him first and examined His rightful place in our lives. Today I want to show you a direct benefit that will come to you when you choose to place Him first:

Seeking God and His kingdom first will drastically reduce your worry.

You ought to put God's kingdom first if for no other reason than to reduce your personal anxiety and worry. Worry is a common issue plaguing many people today. More than forty million adults in the United States suffer from a diagnosed form of anxiety. Countless millions more no doubt suffer from worry or anxiety on less severe levels. Whether it's worrying about jobs, safety, health, relationships, income, terrorism, or the future, worry rots many people's ability to enjoy the gift of life that God has given them.

List some of the subjects or circumstances you regularly worry about.

In what way can putting God first in your priorities, thoughts, and actions reduce your worry about these things?

Although Scripture never calls worry a sin, we can infer God's disapproval from the more than seventy commands by Jesus, as well as Old Testament verses instructing us not to fear or worry. In what situations could worrying be considered a sin? Are there situations in which worry wouldn't be a sin

Read 1 Peter 5:6-11. What four things will God do for you when you replace worry and anxiety with confidence in Him?

1.

2.

3.

4.

The next step in your study of kingdom discipleship is to examine your personal views on seeking God first and the resultant benefits for you.

Read John 3:30. What's your initial reaction to the principle in this verse?

According to Matthew 22:37, in what ways are you to love God? How are those forms of love evident in your life?

Read Psalm 55:22; 56:3; Proverbs 3:5-6; and Philippians 4:6-7. Describe the connections among trust, surrender, and worry.

Are you comfortable with the level of worry in your life? If not, what steps will you take in order to trust, surrender to, and seek God more fully?

Of all the problems you face and the challenges that keep you in perpetual defeat, in which of those problems have you placed God first?

Have you intentionally tried to honor God first in your heart, attitude, choices, and thoughts? How are you seeking His wisdom and will for responding to each situation?

When you seek God first, you can rest because God's got it, and He promises that all these things are already yours in Him.

Prayer

Jesus, forgive me for worrying and feeling anxious rather than casting my cares on You and turning to You first in prayer and faith. You have everything figured out and in control. All You ask of me is that I put Your will first in my life. Show me how I can embrace a life of true surrender and peace in my daily life. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 3

What God Can't Do

People are usually surprised when I bring up the subject of certain things God can't do. They look at me with shock as if I just flew over the cuckoo's nest. But God has said there are certain things He can't do. For example:

... so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie ...

Hebrews 6:18

God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent.

Numbers 23:19

I, the Lord, do not change.

Malachi 3:6

My covenant I will not violate,

Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.

Psalm 89:34

In fact, there are several things God can't do. While Jesus bore our sins on the cross, He didn't sin Himself. This is because God is holy and can't sin. He's perfect in all of His ways.

Do you want to know something else God can't do? God can't be second. He must be first.

Read Exodus 20:3. What are the implications of this verse?

Identify three areas of your life in which God should be first.

1.

2.

3.

Is God currently first in those areas? What would need to change for Him to be first?

In baseball if you miss first base, it doesn't matter whatever else you do. If you run past first base without touching it, touching second, third, or home plate doesn't count. It doesn't matter if everyone in the stands is cheering you or congratulating you when you cross home. If you miss first base, nothing after that matters.

In living as a kingdom disciple, if you fail to seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first, all else is worthless. God has established His rightful place as first. Without surrendering everything to Him, you're on your own.

Read Romans 12:1-2. Briefly describe the major principles of these two verses in your own words.

Verse 1:

Verse 2:

According to Romans 12:2, God's will has three distinct attributes: good, pleasing, and perfect. Why is sacrifice required for living in this will?

Truly living out God's good, pleasing, and perfect will begins with personal sacrifice. Throughout Scripture we read that anytime God wanted to do something significant for His people, He always required a sacrifice first. An action had to be taken to demonstrate sincerity and commitment.

Worship isn't simply singing songs on Sunday. True worship, as outlined in Romans 12, is giving yourself to God in your entirety. True worship is total surrender.

I like the story of the chicken and the pig. Both were walking down the street one day when they came to a grocery store with a sign in the window that read, Bacon and Eggs Desperately Needed. The chicken looked at the pig and said, "I'll give them the eggs if you'll give them the bacon."

The pig stared back at the chicken and replied, "No way."

The chicken asked, "Why not?"

The pig replied, "Because for you, it's a contribution; for me, it's my life."

What did Paul mean when he said we're to be living sacrifices?

Read Galatians 2:20. How can a person be crucified with Christ yet alive to God?

How often are we called to be a living sacrifice or crucified with Christ throughout the day, week, month, or year?

Surrendering is more than simply yielding. Sacrificing occurs more than simply on Sunday morning. Both surrender and sacrifice mean committing all of your energy, emotions, thoughts, and actions to God, under His rule and in line with His commands and instructions for your life. Putting God first is an attitude that shows up in everything and everywhere because God's kingdom rules over everything and rules everywhere.

What would happen if you chose to obey the speed limit only in the town where you lived but opted not to when you drove elsewhere? You would get a ticket, and you might also cause an accident. The rule of the United States governs the entire country. Yet far too many Christians today live as if God's rule applies only to certain moments or situations. And then they wonder why they aren't fully experiencing the manifestation of God's authority, power, provision, and blessing in their lives and why they continue to have accidents and mistakes instead.

Living as a kingdom disciple has to take place twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It's to be a mindset and a lifestyle, not merely a hobby or a habit you engage in from time to time.

This week is all about priorities. Make a list of your priorities for this week in the space below.

How can you place God first while you're accomplishing these priorities?

Do any of these priorities need to change in light of today's study? If so, why?

Prayer

Lord and Savior, open my eyes to discover where I'm failing to put You first in my thoughts, words, actions, and decisions. Help me set priorities in such a way that surrender to You becomes natural. Give me passion to study Your Word, learn Your precepts, and apply them to my life. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 4

Relationship or Religion

An assignment I had in seminary involved writing a research paper. When I turned it in, I was very proud of the work I had put into it. I had done my due diligence. I had controlled the material and made valid arguments. I felt that my paper was strong.

My professor felt otherwise. I could tell by the big zero he wrote in red at the top of the first page. Down at the bottom he had scribbled, "Tony, great work. Great preparation. Wrong assignment."

In my zeal to do this paper well, I had gone off and researched the wrong topic altogether. Yes, I deserved that zero.

Living as a kingdom disciple can be somewhat similar to this experience. It's not that there aren't a lot of people doing a lot of excellent things. It's not that a lot of these same people don't attend church, help the hurting, or say all the correct spiritual phrases. It's just that they've missed the relational connection that comes through voluntary surrender and intentional connection with God. They haven't made Him first in their hearts. They've swapped a relationship with the true, living God with religion and religious practices.

Just as my paper got a zero, religion without relationship won't count for much either when all is said and done.

Read Matthew 23:13-15. In what way can someone make a proselyte while shutting the door of the kingdom of heaven in his face? Name some ways that can happen in today's contemporary religious culture as well.

Read Matthew 23:27. What issue caused Jesus to condemn the Pharisees' practice of religion?

When have you caught yourself focusing more on religious activities than on your relationship with Jesus? Describe your experience.

Contrast the relationship Jesus described in John 15:1-10 with what you just read in Matthew 23:13-15. What's the difference between obeying God because you love Him and obeying Him in order to earn approval? Which phrase more closely describes your relationship with Jesus?

In what ways do you need to shift your thinking from a list of things to do toward the high calling of a relationship? Take a moment to pray and let Jesus know you want to know Him more fully and to reflect His love in your heart, thoughts, and actions.

External observances—the rules and rituals of religion—can get in the way of a relationship with God. In contrast, when you're motivated by a relationship, surrender comes naturally. God wants to be first in your life as your King, but He wants His relationship with you to be the motivating factor for you as His kingdom disciple. Otherwise, you're simply crossing off a list called religion and therefore failing to access the strength, peace, and power that come by way of His love.

We serve a mighty God who's all-powerful, but never forget that He's closer than you think. When Jesus asked the disciples to abide in Him, it was another way of saying, "Stick with Me." He was inviting them (and us) into a relationship in which they would be cared for and loved. His love is to be your driving passion in putting Him first. God doesn't want you to serve Him only because you're supposed to; He wants you to serve Him because you love Him. Abiding is an invitation to dependence. He wants your morality, prayer life, dedication, and service predicated on your relationship with Him rather than on religious duty. Instead of being defined by what you do, God wants you to be defined by whom you know and whom you represent—Jesus Christ.

In what ways are you defined by others, by yourself, or by what you do? Consider ways you try to gain significance or purpose through religious activities, whether personal or corporate.

In what ways are you defined by who you are in Jesus Christ? Consider how often you align your thoughts about yourself with His truth about who you are and how often you go to Him in conversation or thoughts to experience peace, joy, and love.

The solution to the challenges of living as a kingdom disciple isn't down here on earth. The beginning point of our identity, as well as the foundation of living as a kingdom disciple, is found in our spiritual relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. One way we can live a life predicated on relationship rather than on religious activity is found in Colossians 3:1:

If you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3:1

How do you seek things above? You seek things above with all that's in you. Just as you tell the person you're in love with that you love him or her with all your heart, God wants to have all of our hearts in our relationship with Him. He wants us to set our hearts on things above, where His rule and perspective reign preeminent.

Read Matthew 16:21-28. When Peter rebuked Jesus for talking about going to Jerusalem and suffering, in what sense did Peter fail to set his heart on things above?

Rewrite in your own words Jesus' response to Peter in verse 23.

What does setting your mind "on God's interests" mean for living life as a kingdom disciple?

Discipleship is costly. Living as a true kingdom disciple will cost you something (see vv. 24-25). But that cost will become easier to bear when you're motivated by a deep trust and an abiding relationship with the Lord who loves you enough that He died to redeem you. Only by linking your heart with Christ's heart and your mind with His mind in the heavenlies will you discover the joy, peace, and purpose that come through true surrender.

Relationships are cultivated through communication. Take additional time today to speak to and hear from God in prayer.

Prayer

Dear Lord, I choose to let go of the religious activities that distract me from a deep, abiding relationship and fellowship with You. Forgive me for trusting in a list of things to do rather than surrendering my all to You. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 5

Kingdom Vision

I'll never forget one not-so-great experience in the shower. It started when I got soap in my eye. As you can imagine, my eye started burning. So I did what comes naturally: I rubbed it. The problem was that I also had soap on my hands, so not only did I fail to get the soap out of my eye, but I also managed to get more soap in both eyes. Now instead of one eye that couldn't see, I had two.

With both eyes closed, I instinctively reached for the towel. As I groped around for the towel in my blindness, I stepped on the bar of soap I had dropped and went flying, hurting both my head and my back. I was left flailing around in the shower with a headache, a backache, and stinging eyes, all because something had blinded me.

Physical blindness, even temporary, can cause a lot of problems. But spiritual blindness is worse. When you're spiritually blind, you'll wind up with more than just a headache and a backache; you'll wind up with a life ache because you can't live successfully in the physical realm if you can't see the spiritual realm, which affects everything else in life.

God's kingdom operates from the realm of heaven, as we discussed in regard to our need to set our hearts on things above. Thus, the only way you'll be able to see life with clear vision is when you view all of life from a heavenly, kingdom perspective.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:22-23 that if you aren't clear about the kingdom—the things of God—you can't see because you're spiritually blind. And if you're spiritually blind, your feet won't know which way to go. Spiritual blindness affects not only your eyes but also all of your life choices.

Have you had an experience when you had difficulty seeing? Describe some of the challenges you faced.

In what ways can failing to prioritize the King and His kingdom cause spiritual blindness in a person's life?

One result of prioritizing God first is that you get to experience the manifestation of His glory. Romans 11:36 says:

From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:36

As you may already know, amen means “So be it.” By closing the verse with amen, Paul was emphasizing that God’s glory is the bottom line in His kingdom. Paul said everything is from God. He’s the first cause, the source. Then Paul said through God, everything is. He’s the effective cause of everything in creation. And finally, Paul said everything is to Him. He’s the final cause. It all returns to Him to bring Him glory forever.

It’s crucial to understand that God created the universe for His pleasure and His glory (see Rev. 4:11), including each one of us (see Isa. 43:7). God didn’t make the world first and foremost for us but rather for Himself.

Everything is created to bring glory to God. We participate in bringing Him glory by putting Him first in our thoughts, choices, and actions.

Glory is a sweet word. It comes from a Greek word that means “to be heavy” or “to have weight.” Giving God glory is acknowledging His significance. That’s what glory is.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31. How does everything we do present an opportunity to glorify God?

Does glory come only through the seemingly major things we do, like going on a mission trip or volunteering at a homeless shelter? Why or why not?

How do we glorify God in the seemingly ordinary things we do day in and day out?

Are there practices or priorities in your life that need to be adjusted so that you can intentionally bring greater glory to God? Consider your speech patterns, use of time, finances, prayer life, and so on.

Most insurance policies call a natural disaster an act of God. If a storm blows your roof off, for example, that's an act of God. If a hurricane floods a city or a neighborhood, that's an act of God. This type of language assigns blame to God for life's trials.

Yet rarely are we so quick to give God glory when He guides us through a natural disaster with the roof on or the city and neighborhood intact. In all things we ought to give Him glory because He makes it possible for us to eat every day.

Many people run to church when something goes wrong. But people who live as kingdom disciples understand the fullness of God's power and the preeminence of His position over all, so they come into His presence to give Him glory no matter what. Living for God's glory means saying, "Lord, my goal today is to reflect Your significance. I want to ascribe to You the glory that already belongs to You. I want to radiate, demonstrate, magnify, and illustrate Your glory." That's a life lived as a true kingdom disciple.

Take some time to memorize Romans 11:36. Record it as you contemplate God's greatness, sovereignty, and power.

We don't typically have idols like the ones in Old Testament times. But what are some things in our contemporary culture that usurp God's glory in our lives?

Turn your attention to your own heart. What idols are blinding you from seeing God's glory?

One of the first toys I played with as a young boy growing up in Baltimore was a little jack-in-the-box clown that popped up to the tune "Pop Goes the Weasel." I loved that toy. And while that concept is great for a toy, it isn't so great for God.

Yet that's how many people try to treat God—a clown in a box who pops up whenever we want Him to appear and do our bidding: "Bless me now, Lord. I'm turning the handle. Come on, pop up." Then we stuff Him back down in the box and close the top when we don't want to see Him anymore or when we don't want to be burdened by His demands.

A kingdom disciple, however, lives by these words:

Not My will, but Yours be done.

Luke 22:42

... on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:10

In Matthew 13:11 Jesus said the kingdom is a mystery to those who aren't willing to hear, see, and understand what God is doing. But it's a grand adventure for those who are willing to acknowledge God in His rightful place as first over all.

One of the easiest ways to identify personal idols is by looking at ways you spend your time and your money. Think back over the past month. Where did your money go? Where was your time spent?

What are some ways you can more closely align your schedule and your budget to reflect God's rightful priority in your heart and mind?

You answered:

Prayer

Loving Lord and Savior, I seek first You and Your righteousness. I want You to rule over my thoughts, words, and actions. Your ways are higher than my ways, and Your thoughts are higher than my thoughts. Let me live all of my life under Your comprehensive rule so that I can give You the glory and the praise that are due Your name, all the while experiencing the power and blessings You've promised in Your Word. In Christ's name, amen