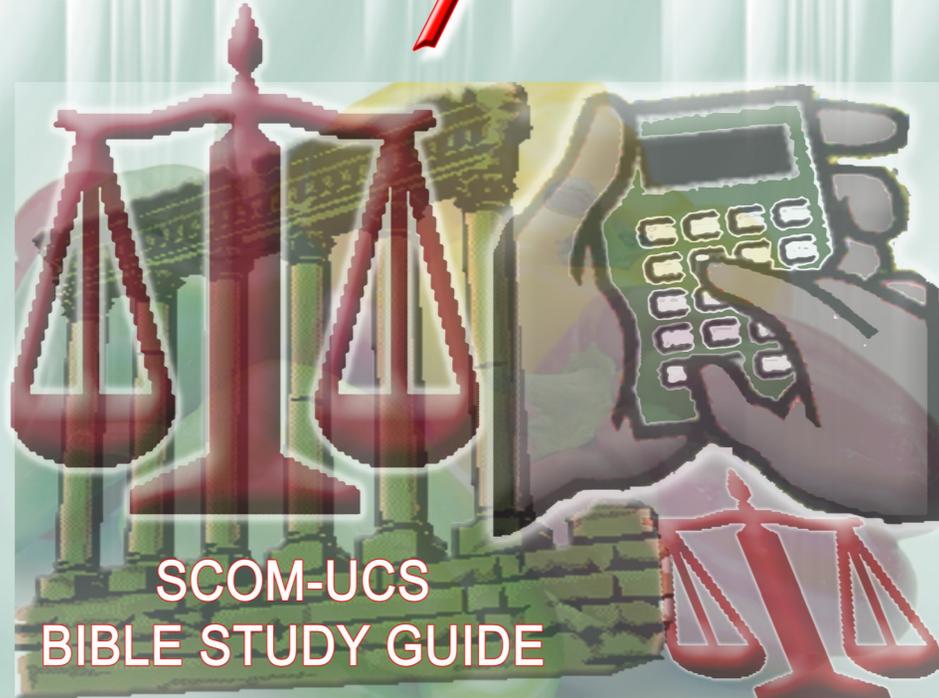


Kingdom Principles



SCOM-UCS
BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

KINGDOM PRINCIPLES

"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Acts 1:6

UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES
SCOM BIBLESTUDY GUIDE

Printed and Published By
SCOM National Office

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Lilongwe

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08 332 445

PREFACE

John the Baptist started his ministry by telling the people to prepare their hearts for the kingdom of God was at hand [Matthew 3:2]. He was preparing the way for the coming King, Jesus Christ. When Jesus finally came on the scene, He talked much both in straight language and parables about the kingdom of God. It seems He came to accomplish a mission for the kingdom. Everything He did was in accordance with the mission of the kingdom.

Christians are known to have duo citizenship. They belong to both the worldly and heavenly kingdoms. They live in this world as ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven. There is a tendency however to live in this world and forget our heavenly citizenship, to get engrossed so much with things of this world and forget that we are citizens of the heavenly kingdom, to operate by the standards of this world at the expense of our kingdom standards. That is what most of us are doing. While we claim to belong to the kingdom of heaven, our actions rarely back our claims. Most often we operate by the principles of our heavenly kingdom. That is what makes our faith irrelevant in this world. That is why Christianity has lost its influence in society. As someone once asked; "of what use is Christianity if it cannot make an impact in society?" such questions are disturbing because they remind us of our expected roles which we have ignored? We have lost our saltiness!

This Bible study on Kingdom principles aims at reminding us of our God given tasks in society. It is intended to stir in the soup as I often call it so that we can be provoked into action; the action of translating the principles of the kingdom of God into daily actions!

Enjoy your study,

Patrick Kaudzu, December 2006

Part A DEFINING THE KINGDOM

Study One

UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOM

Introduction

Jt seems to me that the reason why most of us find it difficult to live by the standards of the kingdom of God is that we are not very clear of what this kingdom is all about. And if you cannot understand the kingdom in the first place, you may find it difficult to understand the implications of being its citizen. Because most Christians fail to see the connection between their faith and their careers, we find a lot of Christians who do not commit themselves to their work. We have many lazy Christians in our offices due to the same ignorance. By the way has it ever occurred to you that your studies are part and parcel of God's plans for you in His kingdom? Have you ever understood the fact that through your studies, God is preparing you for service in His kingdom?

In this study, we will try to understand the kingdom of God and how it relates to us. We will also attempt to discuss some of the reasons why we fail to understand the kingdom of God in our daily lives.

Study Passage: Acts 1:1-11

Study Questions

1. Define the phrase “kingdom of God” in your own terms.
2. What things do you think the kingdom of God embraces in this world?
3.
 - a. What things did Jesus do between the resurrection and ascending to the Father?
 - b. Did the disciples link any of these to the kingdom of God?
4. What question did the disciples ask Jesus after He instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until the fulfillment of the promise?
 - a. Does this indicate that they had their expectations met?
 - b. What kind of kingdom do you think the disciples expected to receive from the Lord?
5.
 - a. Have you ever had a situation in your lives when your expectations were not met by God?
 - b. Did that imply that God had failed you?
6. The disciples had been with Jesus for three and half years and had heard Him talk about the kingdom on many occasions
 - a. What do you think prevented them from understanding the concept of the kingdom as Jesus meant them to understand?
 - b. Why do you think many Christians fail to understand the implications kingdom of God in our time?
 - c. If people fail to understand the basic concepts of the kingdom, do you think they can utilize the kingdom resources appropriately? Explain.
7. “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? Verse 11
 - a. Jesus expected the disciples to return to their base, why do you

think they kept looking up in the sky?

- b. Is it common among us to look up to heaven for answers that God has already provided among us?
8. How would the reminder that the same Jesus who called and commissioned us will come again help you to be useful citizens of the kingdom?

Memory verse:

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and women and gave them many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3

Study Two

THE KINGDOM IS WITHIN YOU

Introduction

There is a place in Germany which is considered as United States of America. There is an army base at that place and I was told in dates back to the Second World War. Despite being in the foreign territory very far away from the real United States, this place is considered part of the States. I did not get the justification very well but the fact still remains that there is part of the US in Germany!

While John talked about the kingdom of God being near the people, Jesus told the same people that the kingdom was actually within them!

Sounds confusing, isn't it? It makes much sense to be in a kingdom and not having the kingdom in you. But since the kingdom of God is not a physical kingdom, it is possible for it to dwell among people even as people dwell in it! It is like a sponge which can be in water and the water also is in the sponge. How can we be in the kingdom while having the kingdom in us at the same time?

In this study, we will try to take another dimension of the kingdom of God. We want to see where the kingdom is and how we can recognize it when we come in contact with it.

Study Passage: Luke 17:20-37

Study questions

1. What question did the Pharisees ask Jesus?
2. Why do you think the Pharisees asked such a question?
3. How did Jesus respond to their question?
4. "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation nor will people say, 'Here it is', or, 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Verse 20-21
 - a. What does it mean to have the kingdom of God within us?
 - b. Is it possible to have the kingdom in us without us knowing we have it within?
 - c. Why is it difficult to see the kingdom of God physically?
5.
 - a. What link is there between the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ?
 - b. Why was it difficult for the Pharisees who were religious leaders to see that link?
6. Why do you think Jesus is linking the days of Noah and Lot to the coming of the kingdom?
7. How do the pleasures of this world hinder our ability to see and prepare for the kingdom of God?

8. What will happen at the end of everything for those who are not citizens of the kingdom of God?
9. What things do you need to watch or deal with in your life in order to concentrate on matters of the kingdom?

Memory verses

"The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation nor will people say, 'Here it is', or, 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17: 20-21

Study Three

BECOMING A CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

Introduction

A number of my relations had to go to the United Kingdom to study or work. Some of them have children born in the UK. These children are automatically citizens of the UK by birth and also citizens of Malawi because that is where their parents come from. I know a number of other people who are also citizens of nations not of their origin and where they have no blood relation. They apply for the citizenship and if they meet the requirements, they may be given citizenship.

The kingdom of God recruits citizens as well. We are born into the kingdom of God by belonging to His family. That is the heart of the gospel, that though we were born in the earthly kingdom, we can belong to the kingdom of God by experiencing a second birth into the family of God.

While applying for citizenship in this world requires a lot of paper work and has legal implications, applying for citizenship in the heavenly kingdom has been simplified by the coming and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. All those who apply are accepted! The question is however, what does it involve to qualify for such citizenship? That is the purpose for this study. We want to see the guidelines set for those that seek such citizenship!

Study Passage: Mark 1:14-20

Study Questions

1. How did you become a Christian? Share with the group.
2. What message was Jesus Christ proclaiming as He went through Galilee?
3. What connection is there between the nearness of the kingdom on one hand and repentance and believing the good news of God on the other?
4. Why are repentance and belief a very critical requirement for entry into the kingdom of God?
5. Thomas Watson said that repentance is a spiritual medicine made up of six ingredients: sight of sin, sorrow for sin, shame for sin, confession of sin, turning from sin and hatred of sin.
 - a. How does this agree or disagree with what Matthew writes in this passage?
 - b. Would repentance be complete and genuine if any of these ingredients were lacking?
 - c. Are there any other ingredients you wish to add to Watson's recipe for repentance? What are they?
6. What link do you see between repentance and the call to follow Jesus as a disciple? Are they one and the same thing or not?
7. One interesting thing about the passage is the manner in which the people called to follow Jesus responded, regardless of their professions [verses 16-20]

If the same call were made to you, how might you respond?

What things would you consider before you say yes to the call?

8. Jesus calls the citizens of the kingdom to recruit more members for the kingdom. How of that are you doing at the moment in your life?

Memory verse

The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news of God [Mark 1:15].

Study Four

THE KINGDOM IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

Introduction

One of the attributes of Jesus as a good teacher was His ability to speak the truths of the kingdom of God in a language people would understand. His use of parables and everyday life situations made it easier for the listeners to translate the spiritual truths into their own contexts. That attribute lacks in the church today. Most often our presentation of the gospel is devoid of the practical side of the truth. At times people are left wondering whether the message preached has anything to do with them at all.

One of the common phrases Jesus used about the kingdom was, "the kingdom of God is like..". He was trying as much as possible to bring down the concepts of the kingdom into everyday language of the people He was serving. I believe if He lived in our time, He would use some of

the familiar things we know in presenting the truth to us. That was the uniqueness of Jesus as a Rabbi! He was down to earth and yet still firm on the truth.

In this study we will look at some of the things that Jesus used to present the kingdom of God to the people. We will also learn some principles of presenting the gospel to people by using what they are already familiar with, things they can identify with.

Study Passage: Matthew 13:24-35, 44-52

Study Questions

1. Define the term parable in your own words
2. What do you think was the reason why Jesus mostly used parables in His teachings?
3. Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to a number of things in the passage of our study:
 - a. Mention the things that Jesus mentions here in explaining the kingdom of heaven
 - b. What was the significance of each of these things in the parables of the kingdom?
 - c. Which of these parables make it easy for you to understand the kingdom?
4. If Jesus had to give some parables of the kingdom in our time, what are some of the things He might likely use that are close to the ones in the passage?
5. What connections do you see between the parables of the weeds in verses 24-30 and of the net in verses 47- 50 on one hand and the parables of yeast and mustard seed in verses 31-35 on the other hand?
6. If you were to summarize all these parables, what would you say about the kingdom of heaven?
7. Jesus used parables to bring down the truths of the kingdom into the everyday life of the people He ministered to.

- a. What things should be considered in presenting the good news to your campus by those that seek to reach it?
 - b. Mention some of the things that the church ought to consider seriously if it has to be effective in reaching the society in which it exists?
8. What do you think is the reason why Jesus likens the kingdom to treasure in verses 44-46, 52?
 - a. What role does the church play here as the custodian of the treasures of the kingdom?
 - b. Do you see the kingdom in the same way?
9. What practical lessons have you learnt from this session that would help you live both as a citizen and a witness of the kingdom of heaven?

Memory Verse

“Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storehouse new treasures as well as old” Matthew 13:52.

Study Five

WHEN CHRISTIANS STICK TO THE SALTSHAKER!

Introduction:

Why is it that Christian Students find it easy to preach in communities around the campus and not the campus itself? Why is that we find it easy to organize evangelistic campaigns and invite external speakers to the same than to reach our fellow students on one to one basis? Why is it that instead of obeying the command to witness for Christ starting with Jerusalem [Acts 1:8], we seem to believe more than a prophet is

without honor in his hometown [Luke 4:24]?

Our campus is our primary witnessing community. Before we go out and focus on the surrounding communities, we must deal with the campus. We must translate the kingdom principles into daily lifestyles which will appeal to our roommates, classmates, hostel mates and the entire campus. That is what it means to be a witness for the kingdom. It is more about how we live than what we say! That is where the problem lies. Most of us live contrary to the message we preach and so we confuse those who watch us. It seems to me that most of us are so heavenly minded that we are irrelevant to the world in which we live. We fail to translate the kingdom principles into principles for daily living thereby missing out opportunities to witness to the world!

In this study we are going to see how as Christians we are supposed to influence our communities for God. We will discuss some reasons why instead of being salt, some Christians remain in the saltshaker and fail to make an impact.

Study Passage: Jeremiah 29:1-23

Study Questions

1. Who were the recipients of the letter that Prophet Jeremiah wrote?
2. What do you think was the purpose of the letter?
3. Mention four major things that the Lord instructed the exiles to do while in Babylon [verses 5-7]. Why was it important for the people to do these things while in exile?
4. It seems that most of us that the exiles were so much Jerusalem minded and able to come to terms with their present reality
 - a. What was the danger of that kind of attitude among the exiles?
 - b. What role did the prophets play in creating this kind of mindset?
 - c. Do you know any Christians or fellow students who live they are in exile? How do they live?

5. You may say, "The Lord has raised up prophets for us in Babylon" verse 15
 - a. Was it true that the Lord had raised such prophets for the people in exile?
 - b. If the Lord had not raised them, where do you think the prophets came from? Would they say the truth if they were not from God?
 - c. Do we have prophets among us that would not be from God?
6. "It is our educated sons and daughters that are letting this country down." Traditional Chief Kalolo
 - a. What do you think are the reasons why most Malawians behave as if they are just passing through Malawi to their promised country somewhere out there?
 - b. What do you think would have happened to the political, economic, spiritual and social development of this nation if all its educated sons and daughters had not flocked to Europe, United States, South Africa, Botswana, etc?
7. "The problem with the church in Malawi is that we have many believers and not many thinkers among our Christians. They are blind followers of their religious leaders" [Collins Mazinyane].
 - a. Do you agree with this radical line of thinking? Justify your answer.
 - b. Why is it necessary for Christians to embrace both faith and reason in their everyday approaches to issues?
 - c. What role would religious leaders play in shaking a mindset that takes a holistic approach to issues?
8. God assures the exiles that He has a plan for them [verses 10-14]
 - a. What are some of the things contained in that plan?
 - b. Was the humiliation of being taken into exile for seventy years part of that plan?
 - c. What is God saying He would do with the prophets that are misleading the People? Can He do the same in our time?

9. Our prosperity as Christians is tied to the prosperity of the world around us to which we are witnesses. How does the realization of that fact prepare you for service in the kingdom and the world around you?

Memory verse

Also seek the peace and prosperity for the city in which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper [Jeremiah 29:7].

**PART B
PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM**

**Study Six
BLESSINGS IN THE KINGDOM**

Introduction

Breakthroughs, blessings, anointing, favor and prosperity are some of the topics that top the agenda in our gatherings. Yes gatherings of champions! Every day we are reminded of how we are supposed to be on top of everything, we are reminded again and again that God intends that we remain heads and enjoy life at every turn of events. Yet reality tells us that there is untold suffering and pain among the believers [or is it thinkers?]. While the church continues to advance and grow at rapid rates in our land as evidenced by the rate at which new denominations are born [or is at which denominations are splitting?], poverty continues to dig its tentacles deeper in the majority of our people, Christians inclusive. Christian thinkers [and I wish to be one of them] begin to wonder whether everything we hear from the pulpit is relevant for real life out there. If it is indeed the will of God that Christians should always be on top of everything, why is it that some

many Christians suffer the whole world over?

There are so many blessings associated with membership in the kingdom. But the way to define these blessings seem to be different from the way we define them in this world. Do blessings mean lack of pain or hindrances in life? Are blessings given to everyone at all times? Are there conditions set for the blessings? Is it possible to be blessed and still suffer insufficiency of some basic things of life? How do we know that someone is blessed in life? Is it possible to claim one's blessings? Questions and more questions! This may sound confusing for some but the reality is that life is not as rosy as we think it is for many. How can we talk about to such people without offending them?

In this study, we are going to concentrate on the teachings of Jesus which are commonly known as beatitudes. These are be-attitudes and no do-attitudes. They are the attitudes that should shape our being and not our doing after all we are human beings and not human doings!

Study passage: Matthew 5:1-12

Study Questions

1. How do you define blessings in your own terms?
2. Where do blessings come from and for what purpose?
3. Are blessings given on conditions or not?
4. What groups of people is the King considering blessed in the kingdom?
5. Why do you think such people are considered blessed? Is this the definition the church has adopted in its messages?
6. The poor in spirit, the mourning, the hungry and thirst for righteousness, the persecuted and the insulted are considered blessed in the kingdom.
 - a. Why do you think these people are considered among the blessed in the kingdom?

- b. If those undergoing these afflictions realized that they are blessed, would their response to the same be different?
7. Have you ever been insulted and persecuted for your faith? How did you feel? Was rejoicing your immediate response to the pain you suffered?
8. We all want to inherit the kingdom, to be comforted, to experience the goodies in life.
 - a. What conditions is the message of the kingdom presenting to us as a pre requisite for becoming blessed?
 - b. Do you think the church is doing enough to position its members where they can get the maximum blessings? Justify your answer.
9. What are some of the things you consider blessings in your life?

Memory Verse:

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:11-12

Study Seven

TREES ARE KNOWN BY THEIR FRUITS

Introduction

An amazing thing has happened at our office. A few years ago I bought and planted an orange tree. The orange bud was grafted on a lemon base. The first year, it produced some very good orange fruits. Last year it did not produce any fruit. This year it has produced a couple of fruits. But they are all lemons. The orange branches that produced orange fruits two years ago, has produced lemon fruits! I asked my wife about it and her comment was that it will stabilize soon and revert back to oranges. I did not plant this tree to harvest lemons and here I am watching lemons grow on the same tree that produced very sweet oranges two years ago.

Is that not what happens with us? God created us in His image and likeness and intends that we produce fruit characteristic of Him. He expects that from us a rich harvest will be obtained which will be responsible for the extension of His kingdom. But does He not see lemons growing where oranges were supposed to come from out from? Perhaps God is optimistic like my wife that eventually we will revert to producing the right fruits as expected. My worry however is that if I were to use the seed obtained from the lemons and plant it, I will get full fledged lemons as a product! Seeds contain all the characteristics of the plant in a dormant stage. Christians contain the character of Christ in human form!

It is disheartening today to notice that most of us would rather display characteristic of our church more than Christ. It seems to me that most of us are more “churchian” than Christian! In this study we are going to look at some of the expectations that God requires from us and how we can attain them.

Study Passages: Matthew 7:15-29 and Galatians 5:16-26

Study questions

1. What kind of people is Jesus calling His listeners to watch out for?
2. Why is it necessary to be on the look out for such religious impostors in our gatherings?

3. a. Why are fruits the best test for the authenticity of a person assuming a position of influence in the church?
b. What are some of the fruits that we should look for in those that are considered Christians?
4. What do you think is the connection among bearing good fruits, entering the kingdom and doing the will of the Father who is in heaven? Is there any short cut?
5. a. What role does the word of God in clarifying the will of God for the citizens of the kingdom?
b. Why is it that those who ignore the word are considered foolish by God?
6. For how long have you been a Christian? How much of the character of Jesus do you think are showing at the moment?
7. What link do you see between the Matthew passage and what Paul is saying in Galatians 5:16-26? How does the Spirit shape the character of Christ in us?
8. Which fruits do you tend to produce; of the sinful nature and of the Spirit? Is it possible to produce both at the same time and in turns as our orange/lemon tree?
[For personal reflection: If your fellow students were to access you what would they say in regard to this study?]
9. The kingdom of God, the will of God, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are all mentioned in the passages of study. What role does each of these play in your life as a citizen of the kingdom?

Memory verse

A good tree cannot bear a bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear a good fruit. Thus by their fruit you shall recognize them [Matthew 7:18,20]

Study Eight

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

Introduction

Love is one of those words that are talked about everyday and yet most of us find difficult to define them. It is not easy to define love though we all talk about it and crave for it. We find it easy to describe love than to define it. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment is, He summed it in one word: love; love for God and love for the other. We are called to love God with our whole being and love the other as we love ourselves.

It always concerns me that most often in our efforts to speak on the parable of the Good Samaritan, one of the most profound lessons from the parable is overlooked, the question the expert in the law asked Jesus; "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" We must never forget that the parable was told as a way of clarifying the answer to this critical question!

In this study we are going to look at some of the implications of the parable in our daily relationships and lives.

Study Passage: Luke 10:25-37

Study Questions

1. What is your definition of love? On what do you base this definition?
2. What question did the expert ask Jesus? Do you think he was really interested knowing how to enter heaven?
3. How did Jesus respond to the question? Why did He answer that way?

4.
 - a. It seems like the lawyer already knew what the law said [verse 27]
 - b. What do you think prevented him from inheriting eternal life?
 - c. Is it common in our time to have the head knowledge of the word of God and be lacking in its practice? Explain
 - d. In what ways do we justify our failure to practice the requirements of the word?
5. If you were to ask these characters in the story:
 - a. What reasons do you think religious leaders would give for not assisting the victim?
 - b. What would the Samaritan say compelled him to risk his life for an unknown victim?
 - c. If you were any of the two groups, what would you say?
6. When the Samaritan found the victim, he did not bother to find out what happened to him or why this man was out on his own in a risky environment. All he did was to assist the victim. He did not say kaya zako izo.
 - a. Do you see any people around campus or in society that you feel are victims of their own bad choices in life? Who are these?
 - b. Have you always been willing to help them?
7. "You have answered correctly, do this and you will live" verse 28.
What would the "go and do likewise" command imply to you as an individual and to your SCOM branch?
Are there any programs that you need to change in order to strategically position yourself to fulfill this requirement?
8. What connection do you see between inheriting the kingdom and love for God and others?

Memory verse

The expert in the law replied, " the one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "go and do likewise." Luke 10:37.

Study Nine

LIFE DOES NOT CONSIST IN THE ABUNDANCE OF WEALTH

Introduction

How do you define life? What does it consist of? When I look around, I see a lot of people that are striving to get things that they think would make life better only to see them disappointed once they get them. There are students who toil their way to success only to lead miserable lives thereafter. I think our major problem is that we have allowed other people to set standards against which we are measured. If we fall short of that then we are failures. If we meet the standards, then we are successful. We have stopped to live for our own selves and have begun to live for the others. We allow them to define us by what we have achieved or not. Our value and worthiness is defined by our possessions and positions in society. We have been reduced to the expectations of others.

Possessions and positions are not the end in themselves. Rather they are meant to be means to the end. God has given them to us as means for achieving the purposes for which He placed us in this world. We are just but stewards given these things in trust for the kingdom. Therefore our focus must be on the Source and not the resource as we often do! Would life be complete without these possessions? The answer is of course yes!

Study Passage: Luke 12:13-21

Study Questions

1. What is life? What criteria do you use to define it?
2. What request did this “someone” make to Jesus and how did He respond to it?

3. It seems like this man was asking for justice to be done in the division of the deceased property. Why do you think Jesus addressed the issue of greed rather than injustice? Should we say He had not understood the question?
4. “..a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” verse 15b
 - a. Mention the things that you think make life complete in your own opinion
 - b. What role do possessions play in life?
5. What things do you consider as very crucial in your life? Would their presence or absence make your life complete or not?
6. The character in the parable was referred to as a rich fool.
 - a. What made him foolish? When do riches or even poverty make people fools in the sight of God?
 - b. Is it possible to be very educated in this life and be a fool as the character in the parable? How would that happen?
7. The life, the land and the rain that supported the crop all came from God.
 - a. In what ways would you have responded to the bumper harvest if you were in the position of the rich fellow in the story?
 - b. Suppose you got a distinction at the end of your studies and thereafter a very good job and other benefits would it be easy for you to realize that it all has come from God and not your effort? Explain
8. Someone said that the things we take to heaven are those things we give up on earth. How would you explain that in the line of verse 20 to 21 of the passage?
9. Reflect on the passage again and see where you have stored most of your treasure in life. Make the necessary transfers of these treasures while you still have time before God could say to you: “you fool” and demand your life back!

Memory Verse

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" Luke 12:15

Study Ten

A MAN REAPS WHAT HE SOWS

Introduction

Just as the fruit reflects the nature of the tree or plant, the seed is a true expression of the plant in dormant form. The seed is alive and capable to producing a plant and fruit of it kind. This is a divine principle. No matter how anointed you may be, full of faith and capable of moving mountains, if you plant maize in your field, you should expect to harvest maize! You would be a fool of the highest degree of folly if you expect to harvest potatoes when you planted maize! Simple logic and yet so profound!

If you take a moment and reflect on your life from this moment backwards to the past two years or so, what things do you see? If God were to multiply these things say just tenfold, would you be happy with the harvest you would get? When you plant a mango seed, you do not expect to get only one mango fruit. Instead you get hundreds of mango fruits every year for the rest of the productive life of that tree! We indeed reap what we sow, only that we reap in multiples of the same kind! That is where care must be exercised on what and how we sow in life!

Study Passage: Galatians 6:1-10

Study questions

1. What instruction is Paul giving concerning those who stumble among us?
2. By promoting gentleness in the restoration of those that fall, is Paul encouraging sin among believers?
3. In what ways would we best carry each other's burdens in our branch?
4. One of the most common manifestations of pride among believers in our time is that of comparing denominations. We seem to have some sort of denominational "spiritualmeters" we use to gauge the spirituality of Christians.
 - a. What warning is Paul giving concerning such unspiritual tendencies?
 - b. Have you ever been despised by those who feel more spiritual than the rest in your fellowship? Share your experience.
5. What links do you see among restoring the fallen, pride over one's spirituality or positions/possession, doing good to others and the principle of sowing and reaping?
6. When you look back at your life, where do you think you have sown more; in the spirit or in the flesh?
7. It seems to me that one of the reason why the AIDS pandemic continues to escalate in our society is that most of us are sowing in the flesh
 - a. Discuss some of the reasons why many young people find it difficult to practice self-control
 - b. If people considered the consequences of sexual sin could they still behave the way they do?
8. The decisions you make today will affect your future positively or negatively. In what ways would this study enable you to be more careful in the way you conduct yourself?

Memory Verse

*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked.
A man reaps what he sows.* Galatians 6:7

Study Eleven:

DO EVERYTHING AS UNTO THE LORD

Introduction

There seems to be a rapid breakdown of the basic structures of the society; the family, the church and the school. While most parents, church leaders and teachers are rating very poorly as role models to their children, youth and students respectively, youth themselves appear to be embracing values systems that threaten the fabric of the society for which they are leaders in the making. At the workplace, Christians are known to be very lazy, some of them reporting for work very late for work and knocking off very early. We are seeing a number of Christians who use official time for doing personal or church businesses.

In general terms, there is this disturbing growing tendency among Christians where they see things in secular and spiritual terms. We are so myopic in our understanding of the kingdom of God that we think it is only confined to the four walls of the church. We fail to realize that the spiritual dwells in the physical and the supposedly unspiritual things of everyday life. God's desire is that we should all serve His purposes wherever we are. As such your studies are part and parcel of His plans for the kingdom.

Study Passage: Colossians 3:18-, 4:1

Study Questions

1. Identify the various groups of people that is Paul addressing in the passage
2. What does each of these phrases mean
 - a. Submit to your husband?
 - b. Love your wives?
 - c. Obey your parents?
 - d. Embitter your children?
 - e. Obey your earthly masters?
 - f. Provide for your slaves?
3. There is an escalation of domestic violence in our society and a lot of factors have been identified as responsible for that.
 - a. What do you think are the causes of this rapid increase in domestic violence in society?
 - b. If wives submitted to husbands and husbands loved their wives unconditionally, would domestic violence still increase as it is doing? Explain.
4. Most employees tend to work hard when their bosses are around and relax in their absence
 - a. What do you think is the cause of this type of working spirit?
 - b. How would Paul's admonition in verses 22 to 25 help change that attitude towards work?
5. Paul seems to have a message for each group of people he addressed in this letter. Why was it important for him to address parents and masters in the way he did?
6. In your understanding, what things do you think fall into the "whatever you do" category of activities in your life? How have you fared in that?
7. In verse 17 Paul brings out a new dimension of the whatever you do

things. He adds our words. What does it mean to do everything in word or deed in the name of the Lord?

8. If you were to take stock of the things you did last year, what do you see as the main motive for doing them? Would you be motivated the same way after this study? Explain.
9. Your studies are part and parcel of the “whatever you do?” things, what does it imply to you to study as unto the Lord?

Memory Verse

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward. It is the Lord you are serving. Colossians 3:23

Study Twelve

THE FIRST SHALL BE THE LAST

Introduction

The kingdom of God seems to be an upside kingdom. Its principles are radically in opposition of the principles of this world. Jesus Christ who was God all the time He was on earth, came not as a king to live in palaces and be served. Rather He owned no home, used borrowed donkey, had one pair of garment and came to serve His very creation. That is counter culture to say the least. Most of the so called servants of God are enjoying every comfort life can afford, they drive in poshy cars, use body guards and are more of masters than

servants!

Success in ministry is defined in terms of material accumulation and number of members and not quality of life the members lead. Leadership is defined in terms of position, influence and dominion and rarely in service to the poor and voiceless. The religious system has failed to hold the economic, social and political systems in check and accountable to God and the people they exist to serve.

In this study we are going to see some of the leadership styles that Jesus demonstrated and how we can apply them in our daily lives.

Study Passage: Matthew 20:20-28 and John 13:1-17

Study Questions

1. What was the real identity of these two sons of Zebedee? Refer to Matthew 10:2-4.
2. What request did their mother bring to Jesus? What was the motive for such a request?
3. Is it common in our time for Christians to seek such glory or similar forms of the same?
4.
 - a. What do you think was the reason why Peter refused to have his washed by the Master?
 - b. From your own knowledge, who was the right person to wash people's feet?
5. What parallels do you see between Peter's reluctance to have the Master wash his feet and the request by these brothers to occupy places of honor in the kingdom?
6. Describe the typical leadership style of our world as revealed by Jesus in verse 25. Could such a perception of leadership have influenced Peter's refusal to have his feet washed by such an unlikely person?
7. What new definition of leadership is Jesus setting for His disciples

in the two passages? How does that fit in your definition of leadership?

8. According to the kingdom, greatness is achieved through simplicity and the great leader is the servant of the led.
 - a. Has such a perception of leadership being evident in your church and fellowship? Can you explain why or why not?
 - b. What do you think is the reason why most of your members find it difficult to do manual assignments such as arranging chairs for weekly meetings?
9. What would John 13:17 mean to you both as an individual and a branch?

Memory Verse

“Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-” Matthew 20:26-27

Study Thirteen

STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

Introduction

God has given us different abilities, skills, gifts and talents for the sake of His kingdom. However it seems to me that each one of us behaves as if what we have received is for our own benefit. We tend to use them to build our own small empires. Churches with certain gifts despise those that do not have what they have. The result is that there is an exodus of Christians from one denomination to the other as they seek what they lack in the previous church. But is that the way we

are meant to use these gifts? Are they really meant for building our kingdoms or His kingdoms? Does the fact that one lacks in some of these gifts, skills and abilities imply that they are lesser Christians in the sight of God?

One of the themes that stands out in the Bible is that of stewardship of resources God has entrusted us with. His desire is that by distributing various gifts to different people, we are going to learn to depend on one another as the body does. Stewardship is a very humble word because it reminds us of the fact that what we have is not ours to keep but to distribute to those that do not have. If we begin owning what we have been given in trust for the others, then like the rich man we saw earlier, we become fools. Stewardship involves all areas of life i.e. human resources [stewardship of relationships], financial resources [stewardship of finances], and spiritual gifts [stewardship of spiritual gifts] and so on and so forth. We are meant to be stewards of whatever we have received from God.

Study Passage: Matthew 25:14 – 30

Study Questions

1. Define the following terms:
 - a. Stewardship
 - b. Talent
2. What criterion did the master use when giving out the talents to the servants?
3.
 - a. Did the servants realize they had such abilities to handle the talents?
 - b. What was wrong with the third servant?
4. What special abilities, skills and talents do you possess as individuals and branch? Are they being put to the right use for the kingdom?
5. The parable does not make it clear whether the master gave any

instructions to the servants on how they were to handle the talents.

- a What do you think prompted the first two servants to invest their talents?
 - b Why did the third servant fail to invest the talent when his friends were doing so?
6. “What’s in it for me?” is a common feeling that makes many people lazy and reactive instead of being proactive.
- a What do you think should be done to create a stewardship mentality in most of the citizens of the kingdom?
 - b What is the fate of those people that fail to recognize the potential God has given them to put to use the various talents they have?
7. Our worth or worthlessness in the kingdom is measured by how well we use the talents God has given us and for what purpose.
- a When you look around, what resources do see as being given to the church and nation? Are they being put to the right use?
 - b What does God threaten to do if we fail to use the talents for His kingdom?
8. If God were to take stock of your life, what would He say about you [well done or you wicked servant]?

Memory verse:

To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.
Matthew 25:15

Study Fourteen

DEVELOPING A KINGDOM MENTALITY

Introduction

We have been looking at some of the principles that govern the kingdom of God on earth. It is important for us to experience the change of the mindset which precedes change. Our challenge is to be able to define the standards by which the kingdom of God is governed as opposed to those of the world. Most of us operate by the standards of this world and as such we find it difficult to cope with the pressure. We live for others and we do not like it yet we find ourselves bound to it if we are to survive.

2

Throughout His life on earth, Jesus tried to change the mindset of the people by giving them a new set of lenses by which they would see their world. Seeing the same world in the eyes of God. We cannot develop a kingdom mentality if we do not put on the new glasses to start seeing what we are not seeing at the moment. Paul challenges his listeners to change their worldview of things so that they can experience the newness of life. He calls them to be transformed and not conform to the standards. While it is easy to conform, conformers rarely make an impact in society.

The greatest contribution the church can make towards the development of this nation is the change of mindset of its members. Once transformation of the mind is accomplished, people will know what is expected of them.

Study Passage: Romans 12:1-8

Study Questions

- 1 What is your understanding of a living sacrifice?

2. Mention some of the things that reflect the pattern of this world. Who is responsible for setting these patterns in your opinion?
3. Is it easy not to conform to the patterns or fashions of this world? Share your experiences and struggles in this area.
4. Unless we experience transformations, we may find it difficult not to conform to the worldly standards.
 - a. How does the transformation occur?
 - b. What is the link between transformation and knowledge of the will of God?
5. How does our appreciation of the rich diversity in the body of Christ enable us to develop a kingdom mentality?
6. The kingdom of God is bigger than any fellowship or church in the world at any point in time.
 - a. Having gone through these study series, what is your understanding of the concept of the kingdom of God?
 - b. What things in your life reflect that citizenship of this kingdom of God?
7. How does your new understanding of the concept of kingdom of God strengthen:
 - a. Your relationship with others?
 - b. Your commitment to the spread of the gospel of the kingdom?
 - c. Your commitment to your studies and profession thereafter?
8. Spend some five minutes or so praying in pairs and as a group to allow the lessons you have learnt sink into your life and be reflected in your daily lives.

Memory Verse:

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” Romans 12:2.