

An abstract painting with a vibrant blue background. The surface is covered in numerous thin, dark, and reddish-brown lines that crisscross and intersect, creating a complex, web-like pattern. The lines vary in thickness and orientation, some appearing as straight strokes while others are more curved or diagonal. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and intricate detail.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

An 8-Week Life Group Devotional Journey

Stanwich Church

Life Group Series • Spring 2026

WELCOME TO THE JOURNEY


The central message of Jesus was the arrival of the kingdom of God. From his very first public words — “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17) — to his final forty days of teaching before the ascension (Acts 1:3), the kingdom of God was not a side note. It was the main thing.

The word “kingdom” appears 120 times in the Gospels alone. Jesus did not simply teach about the kingdom; he embodied it, demonstrated it, and invited his followers to live inside it. The kingdom of God is not a place you go when you die. It is a reality breaking into the present — a new order, a new way, a new King.


Yet for all its prominence in the Gospels, the kingdom is perhaps one of the most misunderstood themes in Christian life. Jesus’ own disciples struggled with it. John the Baptist had his own kingdom blind spots. And we, shaped by Western individualism and cultural Christianity, are not immune.


This devotional is designed to do one thing: help you become kingdom fluent. Over eight weeks, five days a week, you will walk through the biblical theology of the kingdom — from creation to consummation, from Old Testament foundations to New Testament fulfillment.


HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

 **Scripture Anchor** — Read the full key passage for the day before beginning.

 **Podcast** — Each day has an accompanying podcast. Listen before or after your reading to go deeper.

 **Key Insight** — The core teaching drawn from the passage

 **Reflection Question** — One question for personal or group use

 **Prayer Prompt** — A guided closing prayer

Use these devotionals individually each morning, or bring your reflections to your Life Group each week. Listen to the podcast for each day — it will enrich your reading and open up the passage in fresh ways.

The kingdom of God is at hand. Let us not miss it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WEEK 1 • THE KINGDOM IS AT HAND

Day 1	Jesus' Departing Message	<i>Acts 1:1–8</i>
Day 2	The Dominion of God	<i>Genesis 1:26–31</i>
Day 3	A Kingdom of Priests	<i>Exodus 19:3–6</i>
Day 4	A Throne Established Forever	<i>2 Samuel 7:12–16</i>
Day 5	The Anointed One	<i>Isaiah 61:1–4</i>

WEEK 2 • THE REIGN OF GOD

Day 6	Earthly Kingdoms and the Kingdom	<i>Daniel 4:1–3</i>
Day 7	The Ancient of Days	<i>Daniel 7:9–12</i>
Day 8	Kingdom and the Son of Man	<i>Daniel 7:13–14</i>
Day 9	The Kingdom Given to the Saints	<i>Daniel 7:21–22, 27</i>
Day 10	Kingdom and Dominion	<i>Psalms 8</i>

WEEK 3 • SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM

Day 11	John the Baptist and the Kingdom	<i>Matthew 3:1–3</i>
Day 12	Kingdoms of This World	<i>Matthew 4:1–11</i>
Day 13	Kingdoms of This World and Authority	<i>Revelation 13:1–12</i>
Day 14	The Gospel of the Kingdom	<i>Matthew 4:23–25</i>
Day 15	The Kingdom of God Is at Hand	<i>Mark 1:14–15</i>

WEEK 4 • THE WAY OF THE KINGDOM

Day 16	Demonstration and the Kingdom	<i>Luke 4:16–21</i>
Day 17	Kingdom Worth	<i>Matthew 13:44–46</i>
Day 18	The Constitution of the Kingdom	<i>Matthew 6:33</i>
Day 19	The Bill of Rights for the Kingdom	<i>Matthew 5:1–12</i>
Day 20	Kingdom Come	<i>Luke 11:1–13</i>

WEEK 5 • AMBASSADORS OF THE KINGDOM

Day 21	The Cost of the Kingdom	<i>Luke 9:57–62</i>
Day 22	The Kingdom in Our Midst	<i>Luke 17:20–21</i>
Day 23	The Kingdom in Hindsight	<i>Matthew 13:31–33</i>
Day 24	The Kingdom Not Yet	<i>Luke 22:16</i>
Day 25	A Kingdom Not of This World	<i>John 18:33–38</i>

WEEK 6 • Upside Down Kingdom

Day 26	Poor in Spirit	<i>Matthew 5:3</i>
Day 27	Those Who Mourn	<i>Matthew 5:4</i>
Day 28	The Meek	<i>Matthew 5:5</i>
Day 29	Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness	<i>Matthew 5:6</i>
Day 30	The Merciful	<i>Matthew 5:7</i>

WEEK 7 • JOY IN THE KINGDOM

Day 31	The Pure in Heart	<i>Matthew 5:8</i>
Day 32	The Peacemakers	<i>Matthew 5:9</i>
Day 33	The Persecuted	<i>Matthew 5:10–12</i>
Day 34	Salt and Light	<i>Matthew 5:13–16</i>
Day 35	The Law Fulfilled	<i>Matthew 5:17–20</i>

WEEK 8 • FULFILLMENT IN THE KINGDOM

Day 36	Judging	<i>Matthew 7:1–6</i>
Day 37	The Golden Rule	<i>Matthew 7:12–14</i>
Day 38	Fruit	<i>Matthew 7:15–23</i>
Day 39	Foundation Building	<i>Matthew 7:24–27</i>
Day 40	The Authority of the King	<i>Matthew 7:28–29</i>

WEEK 1

Acts 1:1–8 • Genesis 1:26–31 • Exodus 19:3–6 • 2 Samuel 7:12–16 • Isaiah 61:1–4



THE KINGDOM IS AT HAND



DAY 1

Jesus' Departing Message

Acts 1:1–8 | Week Theme: *The Kingdom of God Is at Hand*

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Acts 1:3 *He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.*

KEY INSIGHT

When someone knows their time is short, they speak about what matters most. In his final forty days on earth — between resurrection and ascension — Jesus did not teach about church structure or political strategy. He taught about the kingdom of God. The disciples, shaped by centuries of expectation, still asked the geo-political question: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus’ answer redirected them — not to a date on the calendar, but to a mission in the world. The kingdom would come not through national restoration but through Spirit-empowered witness to the ends of the earth. To understand Jesus is to understand the kingdom.

REFLECTION QUESTION

If the kingdom of God was Jesus’ central message — from his first words (Matthew 4:17) to his final days (Acts 1:3) — what does that tell you about what matters most to him, and how does that priority compare to what drives your own faith?

PRAYER PROMPT

Abba Father, your kingdom come — not as we imagine it, but as you intend it. Forgive us for settling for lesser kingdoms: comfort, cultural Christianity, self. Teach us to understand what Jesus could not stop talking about. Holy Spirit, open our eyes to the kingdom breaking in all around us. Amen.

DAY 2

The Dominion of God

Genesis 1:26–31 | Week Theme: The Kingdom of God Is at Hand

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Genesis 1:26, 28 *Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion...’ God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply... and have dominion.’*

KEY INSIGHT

The kingdom of God did not begin in the New Testament. It began in a garden. Before Israel, before the Davidic throne, before the temple — God was King, and he appointed humanity as his image-bearing vice-regents to rule on his behalf. The Hebrew word for “dominion” carries the sense of a wise steward, not a tyrant. This was not a license for exploitation but a vocation for faithful, creative stewardship. The entire biblical narrative is the story of how that vocation was lost, restored, and ultimately fulfilled in Jesus — the perfect image of God (Colossians 1:15) and the true King.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The “dominion” given to humanity in Genesis was meant to reflect God’s own wise and generous rule. Where in your daily life, work, or relationships are you most aware of carrying that image-bearing responsibility?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord God, King of all creation — you made us in your image and gave us the extraordinary privilege of bearing your likeness in the world. We confess that we have often misused that dominion. Restore in us the vocation you intended from the beginning. Let our lives reflect your wise, generous, and creative rule. Amen.

DAY 3

A Kingdom of Priests

Exodus 19:3–6 | Week Theme: The Kingdom of God Is at Hand

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Exodus 19:5–6 *You shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*

KEY INSIGHT

At Sinai, God gave Israel not just a law but a vocation. They were to be a “kingdom of priests” — a people who exist as the go-betweens for the nations, connecting other peoples to the Lord. Israel was called to exist not primarily for herself but for those who did not yet belong to God. This is the paradox of kingdom people: deeply rooted in covenant with God, and yet always oriented outward. The Apostle Peter picks up this exact language for the church (1 Peter 2:9–11). Kingdom people are an odd ambassadorship — fully belonging to God, yet always sent toward the outsider.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Peter applies the “kingdom of priests” language directly to the church. Who are the individuals and families in your neighborhood, workplace, or community that God may be sending you toward as his ambassador of love and life?

PRAYER PROMPT

Father, you called your people to be a kingdom of priests — chosen not for privilege but for purpose. Give us eyes to see the exiles around us. May our lives be a bridge between your presence and their need. Let us be fully yours, and fully theirs. Amen.

DAY 4

A Throne Established Forever

2 Samuel 7:12–16 | Week Theme: The Kingdom of God Is at Hand

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

2 Samuel 7:16 *Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.*

KEY INSIGHT

David wanted to build a house for God. God turned the offer around and promised to build a dynasty out of David's household. This Davidic covenant became one of the most theologically loaded promises in all of Scripture — a throne and a kingdom that would endure not just through generations but forever. When the kingdom divided, when the temple fell, when the people went into exile, this promise never died. Jesus entered the story as the culmination of this unbroken covenant thread — born of the line of David, announced as the one who would sit on the eternal throne (Luke 1:32–33). The cross, as N.T. Wright puts it, was the decisive royal act by which the true King takes his throne.

REFLECTION QUESTION

In a world where darkness often seems to have the upper hand, how does the unbreakable promise of God's eternal kingdom give you the courage to keep hoping and keep working?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, you are the King whose throne is established forever. When we look at the brokenness around us — and within us — it is easy to lose hope. But your word does not return empty. You are faithful to every promise. Strengthen our faith to trust your timing. Let your kingdom come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

DAY 5

The Anointed One

Isaiah 61:1–4 | Week Theme: The Kingdom of God Is at Hand

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Isaiah 61:1–2 *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.*

KEY INSIGHT

Seven hundred years before Jesus stood in the synagogue at Nazareth and unrolled this very scroll, Isaiah described what the kingdom would look like when it arrived. It would not come with armies. It would come with anointed authority — the Spirit of the Lord upon a person, sent to the poor, the brokenhearted, the captive, the oppressed. When Jesus said “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21), he was declaring: I am the Anointed One. The kingdom is not a system of rules; it is a person to encounter. And the kingdom demonstration — healing, liberation, restoration — was meant to continue through everyone who bears his name and Spirit.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Isaiah 61 is both a portrait of Jesus and a job description for his followers. Which of the people described in this passage — the poor, the brokenhearted, the captive, the mourning — do you sense God drawing you toward right now?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you are the Anointed One — the fulfillment of every prophetic hope. You came to bind up, to liberate, to restore. We invite your Spirit to rest on us as it rested on you. Show us the poor, the brokenhearted, the captive in our sphere of life. May we be instruments of your kingdom — not just in words, but in the tangible, healing demonstration of your love. Amen.

WEEK 2

Daniel 4:1–3 • Daniel 7:9–12 • Daniel 7:13–14 • Daniel 7:21–22, 27 • Psalm 8



The Reign of God



DAY 6

Earthly Kingdoms and the Kingdom

Daniel 4:1–3 | Week Theme: The Reign of God

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Daniel 4:3 *How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.*

KEY INSIGHT

These words come from the most unlikely source: Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon — the very empire that had crushed Israel, sacked Jerusalem, and dragged God’s people into exile. Babylon was the ancient symbol for every kingdom that sets itself against God. Yet even this proud king, after a humbling encounter with the living God, is compelled to testify: there is a kingdom that outlasts them all. The book of Daniel is set against the backdrop of world empires rising and falling — and God’s kingdom standing through every one of them. The kingdoms of this world huff and puff. Heaven patiently waits. Every earthly power that refuses to align with God’s reign is on borrowed time. The Lord’s prayer — “Your kingdom come” — is not wishful thinking. It is a confident declaration that the final word belongs to God.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Nebuchadnezzar only testified to God’s eternal kingdom after he had been humbled. What earthly “kingdoms” — power, status, security, influence — do you find yourself trusting in rather than God’s reign?

PRAYER PROMPT

Father, we confess that we are often more shaped by the kingdoms of this world than by yours. We pray as Jesus taught us: your kingdom come, your will be done. Where we have placed our confidence in earthly power, redirect our trust. You are the King whose dominion endures from generation to generation. Let that be enough for us. Amen.

DAY 7

The Ancient of Days

Daniel 7:9–12 | Week Theme: The Reign of God

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Daniel 7:9–10 *Thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat... the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.*

KEY INSIGHT

In one of the most breathtaking visions in all of Scripture, Daniel sees past the chaos of earthly empires to the throne room of God. The “Ancient of Days” — a name found nowhere else in the Bible — speaks of a God who transcends time itself, whose authority is not granted by any election or conquest, but is simply and eternally his own. The beasts of Daniel 7 represent the great world empires in all their terrifying power. And yet in this vision, they are brought before a court, judged, and stripped of dominion. This is the eschatological hope embedded in Daniel: God’s patience is not weakness. The suffering of the saints is not the final word. The court is already seated. The books are already open. God’s absolute power and absolute patience exist together — and both are expressions of his perfect wisdom.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Daniel’s vision was given to a community living under brutal oppression with no political power. How does the image of the Ancient of Days on his throne speak to places in your life where injustice or darkness seems to be winning?

PRAYER PROMPT

Ancient of Days, you are enthroned above every earthly power. When we grow weary watching wickedness go unchecked, remind us that your court is already in session. You see every injustice. You hold every account. Give us the patience of those who know the end of the story, and the courage to keep living faithfully until that day. Amen.

DAY 8

Kingdom and the Son of Man

Daniel 7:13–14 | Week Theme: The Reign of God

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Daniel 7:13–14 *And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.*

KEY INSIGHT

Here is one of the most important passages in the entire Old Testament for understanding Jesus. The “Son of Man” in Daniel 7 is presented before the Ancient of Days and receives universal, eternal dominion. Jesus chose this title — “Son of Man” — as his most frequent self-designation, and the connection to Daniel 7 was unmistakable to any Jewish listener. He was not merely claiming to be a teacher or a prophet. He was claiming to be the one to whom all dominion belongs. The path to that throne, however, was the cross. The Son of Man “must suffer many things” and be “delivered into the hands of men” before being lifted up. The kingdom does not come through force or conquest. It comes through sacrificial, upside-down love. This is the pattern of kingdom power that his followers are called to embody.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus claimed to be the Son of Man of Daniel 7 — the one to whom all dominion belongs — and yet his path to the throne was the cross. How does that shape the way you understand power, leadership, and influence in your own life?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you are the Son of Man to whom all dominion has been given. Yet you exercised that authority through a towel and a cross, not a sword. Forgive us for the ways we seek influence and recognition on our own terms. Teach us your upside-down way of kingdom power — the way of servant love that inherits the earth. Amen.

DAY 9

The Kingdom Given to the Saints

Daniel 7:21–22, 27 | Week Theme: The Reign of God

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Daniel 7:27 *And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

KEY INSIGHT

The kingdom is not just given to the Son of Man — it is given through him to his people. This is the stunning implication of Daniel 7: the saints of the Most High will share in the everlasting kingdom. Jesus picks up this thread directly. He promises his disciples that they will sit on thrones (Matthew 19:28). He assigns them a kingdom as the Father assigned one to him (Luke 22:29). Paul tells the Corinthians that the saints will judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2). The kingdom rule of God passes forward through a community — a people shaped by the King’s character and sent on the King’s mission. This is not a reward to be earned. It is an inheritance to be received and a vocation to be lived now, in the present, as foretaste and preview of what is coming.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The kingdom is given to the collective known as the people of God, not just to isolated individuals. How does your life in the church, your Life Group, or your Christian community reflect the reality that the kingdom is a shared inheritance and a shared mission?

PRAYER PROMPT

Most High God, you have chosen to share your kingdom with your people. We are humbled that you would entrust so great a privilege to such ordinary hands. Knit us together as a kingdom community — living now into the inheritance that is coming, bearing witness together to the reign of the Son of Man. Let our common life be a sign of your kingdom. Amen.

DAY 10

Kingdom and Dominion

Psalm 8 | Week Theme: The Reign of God

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Psalm 8:1, 6 *O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!... You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.*

KEY INSIGHT

Psalm 8 is a song of wonder. The psalmist looks up at the immensity of the cosmos — moon, stars, the vast heavens — and is staggered that the God who made all of it would turn his attention to humanity. Yet that is precisely the claim: God has crowned humanity with glory and honor and given us dominion over creation. This is the Genesis 1 vocation set to music. But Psalm 8 is also messianic. The writer of Hebrews quotes it directly in reference to Jesus — the one in whom humanity’s vocation is perfectly fulfilled (Hebrews 2:6–9). The dominion given to Adam that was lost in the Fall is restored in Christ. And those who are in Christ are called back into that original vocation given by God: to exercise wise, ordered, creative, stewarded authority and rule as image-bearers of the King. Dominion is not domination. It is the majesty of the King expressed through the serving hands of those who bear his image.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Psalm 8 ends exactly where it begins: “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.” The dominion given to humanity is meant to draw attention back to God, not to itself. In what area of your life — work, creativity, relationships, stewardship — do you most want to exercise your God-given dominion in a way that glorifies him?

PRAYER PROMPT

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. We are astonished that you are mindful of us — that you have crowned us with glory and entrusted us with the care of your creation. May everything we build, make, grow, and lead bring honor to your name. Restore in us the majesty you intended from the beginning. Amen.

WEEK 3

*Matthew 3:1-3 • Matthew 4:1-11 • Revelation 13:1-12 • Matthew 4:23-25 •
Mark 1:14-15*



Seek First the Kingdom



DAY 11

John the Baptist and the Kingdom

Matthew 3:1–3 | Week Theme: Seek First the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 3:1–2 *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

KEY INSIGHT

John the Baptist did not ease anyone into the kingdom. His message was apocalyptic and revolutionary — a complete call to change both thinking and living. He was not offering a refined religious option; he was announcing a decisive turning point in history. “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” carries the force of the perfect tense in Greek: something that was long coming has now arrived. John stood at the hinge of the ages, and he knew it. He was drawing on the full weight of prophetic expectation — Israel’s centuries-old longing for God to act, to restore, to reign. Osborne identifies five themes from that expectation: the regathering of Israel, the destruction of enemy nations, the reign of God’s people, the harvest of judgment, and the transformation of the world. All of this, John announced, was now breaking in. The response called for was not admiration but repentance — a full reorientation of life toward the arriving King.

REFLECTION QUESTION

John’s call to “repent” was not primarily about feeling sorry for sin — it was about a complete reorientation of life toward the arriving kingdom. What in your life most needs to be reoriented right now in light of the kingdom Jesus is bringing?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, give us the courage of John — to stand at the edge of the ordinary and announce that something extraordinary has arrived. Where we have grown comfortable and domesticated in our faith, stir us again with the urgency of the kingdom. We repent of lesser loyalties and turn our whole lives toward you. Amen.

DAY 12

Kingdoms of This World

Matthew 4:1–11 | Week Theme: Seek First the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 4:8–9 *The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”*

KEY INSIGHT

The temptation of Jesus is a kingdom confrontation. Satan’s offer of the world’s kingdoms was either a wild boast or a genuine transfer of authority — and Jesus treated it seriously enough to refuse rather than dismiss. The offer was a shortcut: glory without the cross, dominion without suffering, the kingdom without the cost. Jesus had come as the second Adam, sent to reclaim the dominion that the first Adam had surrendered. But he would do it God’s way — through obedience, sacrifice, and the hard road of the cross. His answer from Deuteronomy was not just a proof text; it was a declaration of kingdom allegiance. The striking parallel comes at the end of Matthew: after the cross and resurrection, Jesus stands on another mountain and says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). He refused the shortcut and received the real thing.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The temptation Jesus faced was to take the glory of the kingdom while bypassing the cost. Where are you most tempted to pursue the blessings or influence of the kingdom on your own terms, avoiding the sacrificial path Jesus modeled?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you refused every shortcut to the throne. You chose the way of obedience over the way of power. Forgive us for the ways we seek kingdom influence while avoiding kingdom cost. Strengthen us to stand on your Word when the kingdoms of this world offer their glittering alternatives. All authority is yours. We bow to no other. Amen.

DAY 13

Kingdoms of This World and Authority

Revelation 13:1–12 | Week Theme: Seek First the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Revelation 13:2, 7 *To it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority... it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation.*

KEY INSIGHT

Revelation 13 is the theological backdrop to Matthew 4. The Satan who offered Jesus the world's kingdoms is the same dragon who gives his authority to the beast. John's vision is not a fantasy — it is a sober theological analysis of earthly power. Behind the pomp and terror of empire lies a delegated, limited, and temporary authority. The beast is given authority “for forty-two months” — a fixed, bounded time. Its dominion is real but not ultimate. God is still in charge as Sovereign authority. Satan and his kingdom are not toe-to-toe with God (dualism), but with us to reclaim what Jesus regained for us (spiritual warfare). This is the context in which the kingdom of God operates: warfare is normal, the saints will face pressure and persecution, but the dragon's lease is already running out. The call at the end of the passage is not panic but endurance: “Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.” Kingdom people are not surprised by opposition. We are prepared for it.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Revelation 13 tells us that spiritual warfare is normal for kingdom people — not exceptional. How does understanding that the enemy's authority is real but bounded and temporary change the way you face spiritual opposition in your own life?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, you are sovereign over every power and authority. We acknowledge that the battle is real — but we refuse to be paralyzed by it. The dragon's lease is expiring. Dress us in your armor, Lord. Give us endurance and faith. We take our stand not in our own strength but in the authority of the one to whom all dominion belongs. Amen.

DAY 14

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Matthew 4:23–25 | Week Theme: Seek First the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 4:23 *He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.*

KEY INSIGHT

Matthew’s summary of Jesus’ ministry is a two-handed rhythm: proclamation and demonstration. The gospel of the kingdom was not only announced — it was shown. Healing the sick, freeing the oppressed, restoring the broken — these were not additions to the kingdom message. They were the kingdom message made visible. Jesus uses “kingdom of heaven” 53 times in Matthew alone, and Luke tells us he traveled from town to town “proclaiming and bringing” the kingdom (Luke 8:1). The word for “bringing” is the same root as the word for gospel — the good news was something carried, embodied, delivered in person. This is the model Jesus passes on to his followers: those who believe in him will do what he does (John 14:12). Kingdom living is not passive. It announces and it acts. It speaks and it heals. It proclaims and it brings.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus’ kingdom ministry was always both proclamation and demonstration — word and deed together. Which side of that rhythm comes more naturally to you, and what would it look like to more intentionally embrace the other?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you proclaimed and you brought the kingdom. You never separated the word from the work. Give us the same rhythm in our own lives — boldness to announce the good news and courage to demonstrate it. Let our lives be a visible, tangible expression of the kingdom you are building. Amen.

DAY 15

The Kingdom of God Is at Hand

Mark 1:14–15 | Week Theme: Seek First the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

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

KEY INSIGHT

Mark places this declaration in the shadow of John the Baptist’s arrest. Jesus picks up the torch immediately — not despite the danger, but in response to it. The kingdom does not retreat when the cost becomes clear. The phrase “the time is fulfilled” announces that the long prophetic countdown is over. Every promise, every longing, every “not yet” in the Hebrew scriptures has found its moment. Even John the Baptist — the one who first announced the kingdom, whom Jesus called the greatest born of woman — struggled to hold on to his kingdom convictions when his circumstances turned dark. From prison he sent disciples to ask: “Are you the one, or shall we look for another?” The lesson is sobering: it is possible to know the kingdom theologically and still miss it experientially when life does not unfold as expected. Kingdom fluency is not just intellectual. It must be forged in trust.

REFLECTION QUESTION

John the Baptist announced the kingdom and then doubted it from prison. Have you ever found your kingdom convictions shaken by circumstances that didn’t match your expectations of how God works? What helped you — or what do you need — to hold on?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom is at hand — even when we cannot see it. Even when our circumstances look like the opposite of kingdom come. Give us the faith of those who believe before they see. Where we have grown confused or discouraged, speak again your word over us: the kingdom is here. Repent and believe. Amen.

WEEK 4

Luke 4:16–21 • Matthew 13:44–46 • Matthew 6:33 • Matthew 5:1–12 • Luke 11:1–13



THE WAY OF THE KINGDOM



DAY 16

Demonstration and the Kingdom

Luke 4:16–21 | Week Theme: The Way of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Luke 4:18–21 *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor... And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*

KEY INSIGHT

This is the moment Jesus publicly defines his mission. He walks into his hometown synagogue, unrolls the scroll of Isaiah, reads the kingdom manifesto — and then sits down and says: today. Not eventually. Not in some future age. Today. The kingdom has arrived in his person and his presence. The launch of Jesus’ ministry in Luke is inseparable from its content: good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, freedom for the oppressed. Luke then follows this declaration with a summary of Jesus’ ongoing practice: “He went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom” (Luke 8:1). The kingdom is not a theology to be debated. It is a way of life to be apprenticed. Jesus demonstrates it first, and then invites his followers into the same.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus said “today this Scripture is fulfilled” — the kingdom had arrived in him. As someone who carries his Spirit, what does it mean for the kingdom to be “fulfilled” in your hearing, your neighborhood, your daily life today?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you launched your ministry with a declaration: today. Not someday — today. Give us that same urgency. Where the poor need good news, send us. Where the captive needs freedom, use us. May the kingdom that arrived in you continue to arrive through us, by the power of your Spirit. Amen.

DAY 17

Kingdom Worth

Matthew 13:44–46 | Week Theme: The Way of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 13:44–46 *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

KEY INSIGHT

Two parables, one point: the kingdom of God is worth everything. The man who finds the treasure and the merchant who finds the pearl both respond the same way — they liquidate everything else without hesitation. Notice that in both cases the response is not reluctant sacrifice but joyful relinquishment. The man does not trudge to sell his possessions — he goes “in his joy.” This is the corrective to a grim, duty-driven faith. The kingdom is not a burden to be carried but a treasure to be celebrated. Jesus reinforces this elsewhere: there is no one who has left house or family “for the sake of the kingdom of God” who will not receive many times more (Luke 18:29–30). What feels like loss from the outside looks entirely different from inside the kingdom. The cost is real. But so is the find.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The man sells everything “in his joy” — not reluctantly. Is your relationship with the kingdom more characterized by joyful pursuit or dutiful obligation? What would it look like to recover the joy of the treasure?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, forgive us for treating your kingdom as an obligation rather than a treasure. You are the pearl of great price — and everything we release for your sake is not loss but gain. Rekindle in us the joy of those who have found what they were always looking for. Let us hold loosely to everything that is not you. Amen.

DAY 18

The Constitution of the Kingdom

Matthew 6:33 | Week Theme: The Way of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

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

KEY INSIGHT

The Sermon on the Mount is the most concentrated body of Jesus' kingdom teaching in the Gospels. It has been read as an impossible moral code, a monastic ideal, a dispensational aside — but Jesus intended it as a constitution for kingdom living, accessible to all his followers. Matthew 6:33 is its hinge verse: seek first the kingdom. Not second. Not when everything else is sorted. First. The kingdom is not one item on the list of life's priorities — it is the reordering principle for the entire list. And the promise attached is remarkable: when the kingdom comes first, the things we most anxiously grasp after — provision, security, significance — are added. This is not a prosperity formula. It is a description of how life works when it is oriented correctly. Anxiety shrinks when the King is on the throne of your daily life.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Matthew 6:33 assumes that the natural drift of human life is to seek other things first — security, comfort, approval. What would it practically look like for you to “seek first” the kingdom in the rhythms of your actual daily life this week?

PRAYER PROMPT

Father, we confess that we often seek security first, comfort first, approval first — and fit you in around the edges. Reorder our lives around your kingdom. Not as a reluctant discipline but as a joyful reorientation. We trust that when you are first, everything else finds its proper place. Give us kingdom eyes for an ordinary day. Amen.

DAY 19

The Bill of Rights for the Kingdom

Matthew 5:1–12 | Week Theme: The Way of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:3, 10 *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

KEY INSIGHT

The Beatitudes open and close with the same declaration: “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is not accidental. Everything in between — mourning, meekness, hunger for righteousness, mercy, purity, peacemaking — is the description of the person who inhabits the kingdom. These are not entry requirements. They are the characteristics of those who have already been welcomed in. The kingdom does not belong to the self-sufficient, the powerful, or the culturally admired. It belongs to those who know their poverty, grieve their brokenness, and hunger for something they cannot produce on their own. This is the upside-down logic of the kingdom that offends every instinct of the world. Kingdom membership is not earned — it is received. And those who receive it are gradually, by grace, shaped into its likeness.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The Beatitudes describe a person who is simultaneously humble, hungry, merciful, and persecuted — and called “blessed.” Which of the Beatitudes feels most countercultural to you right now, and what would it look like to lean into it?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, your kingdom belongs to those who know they are empty, not those who are full of themselves. We come to you as the poor in spirit — needing everything you offer and bringing nothing to earn it. Form in us the character of the Beatitudes. Make us meek, merciful, pure, and hungry for righteousness. We want to live inside the upside-down beauty of your kingdom. Amen.

DAY 20

Kingdom Come

Luke 11:1–13 | Week Theme: The Way of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Luke 11:2, 13 “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come... how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

KEY INSIGHT

The disciples did not ask Jesus to teach them many things. They asked him to teach them to pray — because they had watched him pray and sensed that something was happening in those moments. He demonstrated the kingdom of God, with servant leadership, demonstrated authority, and a not yet seen type of love. Thus his prayer invokes: “Your kingdom come.” Prayer is not first a tool for getting things from God. It is alignment with the purposes of God. To pray “your kingdom come” is to say: I want what you want, more than I want what I want. Jesus frames the Father as one who delights to give — not reluctantly but eagerly, not partially but abundantly. The closing promise is not generic provision but the Holy Spirit himself. The kingdom comes through the Spirit. Prayer is how we open ourselves to that coming — asking, seeking, knocking, persisting. The kingdom is not passive. It requires partners.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says the Father “delights to give” the Holy Spirit to those who ask. How persistently and specifically are you asking God for the Spirit’s work in your life, your family, and your community? What would it look like to pray for the kingdom more urgently?

PRAYER PROMPT

Our Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come — in our homes, our workplaces, our church, our city, our world. We ask, we seek, we knock. We do not give up. Give us your Holy Spirit in greater measure. Make us partners in your kingdom purposes. Not our will but yours. Amen.

WEEK 5

Luke 9:57–62 • Luke 17:20–21 • Matthew 13:31–33 • Luke 22:16 • John 18:33–38



Ambassadors of the Kingdom



DAY 21

The Cost of the Kingdom

Luke 9:57–62 | Week Theme: Ambassadors of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Luke 9:62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

KEY INSIGHT

Three conversations, one theme: the kingdom demands undivided allegiance. The first volunteer learns that kingdom life offers no guaranteed comfort — the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. The second is called to go and proclaim but wants to bury his father first — a reasonable request made unreasonable by the urgency of the moment. The third wants to say farewell to those at home. Jesus’ responses are not cold but clarifying. He is not forbidding grief or family love. He is exposing the habit of always having something more pressing than the kingdom. Looking back — like Lot’s wife, like the Israelites longing for Egypt — is the spiritual reflex of a life not yet fully surrendered. The kingdom is costly. But the alternative — a life built around smaller, safer loyalties — costs more in the end.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus identifies three patterns: seeking comfort, postponing commitment, and looking back. Which of these most honestly describes a tendency in your own walk with God, and what would full-forward kingdom allegiance look like for you?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you call us to put our hand to the plow and not look back. Forgive us for the ways we negotiate our commitment, postpone our obedience, and reach for the comforts this world offers. We choose you — not reluctantly, but with open hands. Lead us forward into the kingdom life you have for us. Amen.

DAY 22

The Kingdom in Our Midst

Luke 17:20–21 | Week Theme: Ambassadors of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Luke 17:20–21 *“The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”*

KEY INSIGHT

The Pharisees wanted a sign — a dramatic, unmistakable, geo-political arrival. Jesus redirected them: the kingdom does not arrive with fanfare and observable spectacle. It is “in the midst of you” — a phrase that carries both personal and communal dimensions. Present with you. Moving through you. Operating among you. This is one of the most challenging aspects of kingdom life: learning to see what is already here. The kingdom is not only coming — it has come. It is not only future — it is now. Not fully realized, not yet consummated, but genuinely present. Kingdom fluency includes the discipline of perception — training your eyes to notice where God is already at work, already moving, already present in the ordinary fabric of daily life. Those who are looking in the wrong place will always miss it.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says the kingdom is already “in the midst of you” — present but easily missed. Where have you recently noticed the kingdom of God at work in your life or community in ways you almost overlooked?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, open our eyes to what is already here. We confess that we often look past your kingdom while searching for it. Give us eyes to see your presence in the ordinary — in an act of kindness, a moment of restoration, a conversation that turns toward grace. Train us to notice. Amen.

DAY 23

The Kingdom in Hindsight

Matthew 13:31–33 | Week Theme: Ambassadors of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 13:31–32 *The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree.*

KEY INSIGHT

Jesus is a storyteller, and his parables are houses — they invite you in. The mustard seed and the leaven both make the same point: the kingdom often looks like nothing is happening. A seed buried in the ground. A pinch of yeast folded into dough. Neither looks like a kingdom. Both are irresistible in their growth. The best measure of the kingdom is not the present moment but the long view — what Ken Boa calls the transformation equation: grace + truth + time = transformation. In West Africa, watching a church planted in a village where Jesus had no name, the kingdom looked like a mustard seed for years before it looked like a tree. Planting a church campus in Stamford, Connecticut has the same feel. The temptation is always to judge kingdom work by immediate, visible results. Jesus consistently refuses that measure. The kingdom is patient, hidden, and certain. One day the small mustard seed is a big tree where birds come and rest in its branches (Luke 13:19).

REFLECTION QUESTION

Looking back over your life or the life of your church community, where can you now see kingdom growth that looked like “nothing happening” in the moment? What does that history teach you about how to stay faithful in a season where the seed seems buried?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, you are the God of the mustard seed and the leaven — the God who works quietly, persistently, irresistibly. Give us patience when we cannot see the growth. Give us faithfulness when the work feels small. We trust that what you begin, you finish. Do not let us grow weary in doing good. Amen.

DAY 24

The Kingdom Not Yet

Luke 22:16 | Week Theme: Ambassadors of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Luke 22:16 *For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

KEY INSIGHT

At the Last Supper, on the night of his betrayal, Jesus lifts his eyes past the cross to the feast that is coming. He will not eat this Passover again until the kingdom is fully consummated — when the marriage supper of the Lamb becomes the final, eternal celebration of God’s reign. This is the “not yet” of the kingdom. Every Lord’s Supper we share is a foretaste of that banquet and a declaration that we are not home yet. Even the greatest kingdom manifestations on this side of eternity are partial — Lazarus is raised, and then dies again. Healing happens, and then the body ages. The kingdom is real and present, but it is not complete. The danger of the “not yet” is using it as an excuse to disengage — to live for the future while neglecting the present. We are learning the ways of the kingdom now for our eternal destiny. The table is set. But we are not yet seated.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The “not yet” of the kingdom is meant to produce longing, not passivity. How does the promise of the coming kingdom — the final feast when all things are made new — fuel your engagement with the broken world today rather than give you permission to check out?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you looked past the cross to the coming feast. Give us that same long-sighted hope. Where we are tempted to grow discouraged by what is not yet healed, not yet restored, not yet made right — anchor us in the certainty of the coming kingdom. May the not-yet make us more faithful in the now. Amen.

DAY 25

A Kingdom Not of This World

John 18:33–38 | Week Theme: Ambassadors of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

John 18:36–37 *“My kingdom is not of this world... for this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world — to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”*

KEY INSIGHT

Pilate had a category for kingdoms — power, territory, armies, domination. Jesus’ kingdom fit none of them. “Not of this world” does not mean irrelevant to this world. It means operating by a completely different set of values and methods. Pilate’s world ran on the institutional authority of power and force. Jesus’ kingdom runs on the spiritual authority of love and truth. Pilate asked “what is truth?” and walked away before he got the answer — the answer was standing in front of him. Paul puts the contrast plainly: “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). The kingdom is not located in geography, ethnicity, or political party. It is located in a person — Jesus — and it spreads through those who bear witness to the truth of who he is and what he has done.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Pilate’s kingdom used force; Jesus’ kingdom uses truth and love. Where are you most tempted to use worldly methods — pressure, manipulation, platform, or power — to advance what you believe are kingdom ends?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, your kingdom is not of this world — and neither, ultimately, are we. Teach us to be ambassadors of a kingdom whose currency is truth, whose power is love, and whose method is witness. Where we have confused your kingdom with any earthly agenda, forgive us and realign us. We belong to the kingdom of the Lamb. Amen.

WEEK 6

Matthew 5:3 • Matthew 5:4 • Matthew 5:5 • Matthew 5:6 • Matthew 5:7



UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM



DAY 26

Poor in Spirit

Matthew 5:3 | Week Theme: Upside Down Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

KEY INSIGHT

The Beatitudes begin where the kingdom always begins: with emptiness. “Poor in spirit” does not mean dejected or self-loathing. It means knowing that you have nothing to bring, nothing to offer, nothing to leverage before God. It is the opposite of spiritual self-sufficiency. The rich in spirit — those who believe their own religious performance is enough — find the kingdom closed to them. The poor in spirit — those who arrive before God with open, empty hands — find it flung wide open. This is the great reversal at the heart of the kingdom. The first Beatitude is the doorway through which all the others are entered. You cannot mourn rightly, be meek genuinely, or hunger for righteousness authentically until you have first acknowledged that you are spiritually bankrupt without God. Poverty of spirit is not a weakness to overcome. It is the posture through which the kingdom is received.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Poverty of spirit means knowing you have nothing to bring to God and everything to receive from him. Where in your spiritual life are you most tempted toward self-sufficiency — managing your faith on your own terms rather than receiving it as a gift?

PRAYER PROMPT

Father, we come to you with empty hands. We have nothing to offer that you have not first given us. Strip away every pretense of spiritual self-sufficiency. Teach us to be poor in spirit — to stand before you not with our achievements but with our need. The kingdom belongs to the empty-handed. Make us empty. Amen.

DAY 27

Those Who Mourn

Matthew 5:4 | Week Theme: Upside Down Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

KEY INSIGHT

To mourn is to be honest about the gap between what is and what should be. Kingdom people mourn — for their own sin, for the brokenness of the world, for the suffering of those around them, for the distance between the present age and the coming kingdom. This is not pessimism; it is prophetic realism. The prophets and Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Jesus wept in the face of Mary’s grief over death. Paul wrote of “groaning” with all creation as it waits for redemption (Romans 8:22–23). Grief and hope are not opposites in the kingdom — they exist together. The mourner is blessed not because the sorrow is denied but because comfort is promised. The God who mourns with us is also the God who promises to wipe away every tear when the Kingdom comes in final culmination (Revelation 21:4). Kingdom people hold grief and hope in the same hand, trusting that what is lamented now will be restored in the age to come.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says mourning is blessed — not something to suppress or rush past. What grief or sorrow are you currently carrying, and what would it mean to bring that honestly before God and trust him with it?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, you are close to the brokenhearted. We bring to you the grief we have been managing alone. We mourn what is broken in us, in our relationships, in our world. Comfort us with the comfort that only you can give — not a dismissal of the pain, but a presence within it. We trust the one who wipes every tear. Amen.

DAY 28

The Meek

Matthew 5:5 | Week Theme: Upside Down Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:5 *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”*

KEY INSIGHT

Meekness is not weakness. In the ancient world, the word referred to a powerful horse under the control of its rider — enormous strength held in disciplined submission. The meek person is not someone without power but someone who has placed their power under God’s authority. In a culture that admires aggression, self-promotion, and the forceful seizure of opportunity, meekness looks like a liability. Jesus says it is the path to inheritance. The earth does not go to the powerful and the grasping. It goes to those who hold their strength loosely and trust God for the outcome. This is the same logic as the cross: the one who surrendered everything received everything. Meekness is not passivity — it is a deep, active trust that God’s way of going about things is better than ours, even when ours would get faster results.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Meekness means placing your strength and your agenda under God’s authority rather than asserting them on your own terms. Where in your life do you find it hardest to be meek — to trust God’s pace and method rather than taking matters into your own hands?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, you are gentle and lowly in heart, and you invite us to learn from you. Tame our self-assertion. Soften our need to control outcomes. Give us the meekness that comes not from having nothing to offer but from having placed everything we are under your authority. Teach us your gentle way. Amen.

DAY 29

Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

Matthew 5:6 | Week Theme: Upside Down Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:6 *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”*

KEY INSIGHT

Jesus uses the most urgent physical sensations — hunger and thirst — to describe the right posture toward righteousness. Not a mild preference. Not an occasional aspiration. A craving so intense it occupies the whole person. The word “righteousness” in Matthew’s Gospel carries both personal and social dimensions: personal holiness and right relationships within a community shaped by God’s justice. Kingdom people hunger to be transformed personally and to see the world transformed structurally — injustice confronted, the poor lifted, the oppressed freed. The promise is satisfaction — not partial fulfillment but the deep satiety of one who has eaten until they are full. This hunger will be ultimately satisfied in the age to come. But it is also fed now, as the kingdom breaks in and God’s righteousness takes root in the soil of surrendered lives.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says the blessed person hungers and thirsts for righteousness with the same urgency as a starving person craves food. How hungry are you — really — for personal holiness and for justice in the world? What would it look like to let that hunger grow?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, stir up in us a genuine hunger for righteousness — not the performance of it, but the reality of it. Make us dissatisfied with our own spiritual comfort while injustice persists around us. Feed us with your righteousness even as you fill us with a longing for more. We want to be satisfied by you alone. Amen.

DAY 30

The Merciful

Matthew 5:7 | Week Theme: Upside Down Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:7 *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”*

KEY INSIGHT

Mercy is the kingdom’s native language. The entire story of Scripture is the story of a God who keeps showing mercy to people who keep not deserving it. The Beatitudes are not a list of virtues to cultivate in isolation — they are the overflow of a life that has been transformed by encountering the mercy of God. Those who have genuinely received mercy cannot help but extend it. Jesus’ parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18) makes the logic plain: the one who has been forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents and refuses to forgive a debt of a hundred denarii has not truly grasped what was done for him. The measure of how deeply we understand God’s mercy to us is the measure of mercy we extend to others. Kingdom mercy is not soft on justice — it is the form that justice takes when it passes through the cross.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The capacity to show mercy to others flows from the depth of our own experience of God’s mercy. Is there someone in your life right now to whom you are withholding mercy — and what would it look like to extend it?

PRAYER PROMPT

Father, you are rich in mercy. You have forgiven us a debt we could never repay. Let that mercy overflow from us to the people in our lives who have wounded or disappointed us. Free us from the prison of withheld forgiveness. May we be known as people who give away what we have so freely received. Amen.

WEEK 7

Matthew 5:8 • Matthew 5:9 • Matthew 5:10–12 • Matthew 5:13–16 • Matthew 5:17–20



Joy in the Kingdom



DAY 31

The Pure in Heart

Matthew 5:8 | Week Theme: Joy in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

KEY INSIGHT

Purity of heart is not the absence of temptation or struggle — it is the absence of a divided loyalty. Kierkegaard’s famous definition is the key: “purity of heart is to will one thing.” The pure heart is the undivided heart — the one that has organized itself around a single ultimate allegiance. In the Old Testament, to “see God” was reserved for the most holy encounters — Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel. Here Jesus democratizes it: those with undivided hearts will see God. Not as a reward earned by moral perfection but as the natural vision of those who are oriented wholly toward him. This is the promise of the kingdom: not just forgiveness, not just membership, but intimacy. The whole movement of redemption is toward this end — that we would know God as he knows us, see him as he sees us, and be fully seen. The pure in heart are not those who never struggle but those who refuse to stop turning toward the light.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Purity of heart means a single, undivided loyalty to God. Where is your heart most divided — pulled between God and something else — and what would it mean to let God have that space fully?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. I confess the ways my heart is divided — pursuing you with one hand and clutching other things with the other. Unite my heart to fear your name. I want to see you — not just know about you, but actually see you. Make me pure in heart. Amen.

DAY 32

The Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9 | Week Theme: Joy in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:9 *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”*

KEY INSIGHT

Peacemakers are not peacekeepers. Peacekeeping avoids conflict and suppresses tension to maintain surface calm. Peacemaking enters the conflict, bears the cost, and works toward genuine reconciliation. Jesus is the supreme peacemaker — the one who entered the deepest conflict in the universe, between God and humanity, and resolved it at the cost of his own blood. To be a “son of God” or a “daughter of God” is to bear a family resemblance to the one and only unique Son, Jesus. Kingdom people inherit the family vocation: go into the places of conflict and make peace. This is not naive or passive. Paul describes it as a ministry: “God... gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). The kingdom is spreading whenever broken relationships are restored, whenever enemies are reconciled, whenever the dividing wall of hostility comes down. Peacemakers are some of the most active, courageous people in the kingdom — because real peace always costs something.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Peacemaking is active, costly, and Christlike — very different from simply avoiding conflict. Is there a broken relationship, a divided community, or a conflict in your sphere of life where God is calling you to be a peacemaker?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, you are the God of peace, and you have called us into the ministry of reconciliation. Give us the courage to enter the hard places — the broken relationships, the fractured communities, the places of hostility — and to work for real peace. Make us recognizable as your children by the peacemaking we carry. Amen.

DAY 33

The Persecuted

Matthew 5:10–12 | Week Theme: Joy in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:10–12 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”

KEY INSIGHT

The Beatitudes close where they opened — with the kingdom of heaven. But the final Beatitude adds something unexpected: rejoice. Not just endure. Not just hold on. Rejoice. This is the most countercultural expectation in the entire passage. Jesus is not trivializing suffering — he is reframing it within the larger story. Persecution for righteousness is evidence that you are aligned with the King whose kingdom was rejected by the powers of this age. The prophets before us were treated the same way. The company we keep in suffering is actually extraordinary. Paul echoes this in Romans 5: we “rejoice in our sufferings” because suffering produces character, and character produces hope. The kingdom does not promise the absence of difficulty. It promises the presence of God in the difficulty and a reward that makes the difficulty look small in retrospect.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says to rejoice in persecution — not to perform happiness but to see it within the larger story of the kingdom. When you face pushback or cost for your faith, what helps you hold on to the “rejoice and be glad” perspective?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, you warned us that the world would treat us as it treated you. When we face misunderstanding, opposition, or cost for following you, fill us with the joy that comes not from our circumstances but from the certainty of your kingdom. Great is our reward. May that truth be greater than every present difficulty. Amen.

DAY 34

Salt and Light

Matthew 5:13–16 | Week Theme: Joy in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:14–16 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

KEY INSIGHT

After the Beatitudes, Jesus immediately turns outward. The character formed by kingdom life is not meant to stay private. Salt seasons and preserves. Light illuminates and exposes. Both images are about influence in the world, not withdrawal from it. Jesus does not say “be” salt and light — he says “you are.” It is a statement of identity before it is an imperative. You already are this. The question is whether you are functioning as what you are. Salt that has lost its saltiness has lost its purpose. Light hidden under a basket serves no one. The kingdom spreads not primarily through campaigns and programs but through the ordinary visible goodness of people whose lives have been transformed by the King. The goal of kingdom witness is not to impress people with Christians but to direct their attention to the Father. Every good work is a signpost pointing beyond itself.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says you already are the light of the world — the question is whether you are letting it shine. In your most ordinary contexts — neighborhood, workplace, family — what does “letting your light shine” practically look like this week?

PRAYER PROMPT

Father, you have placed us in the world as salt and light — not to be impressive but to be useful. May our lives have the flavor of your kingdom and the luminosity of your presence. When people see the way we live, may they be drawn not to us but to you. Let our light shine for your glory. Amen.

DAY 35

The Law Fulfilled

Matthew 5:17–20 | Week Theme: Joy in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 5:17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

KEY INSIGHT

Jesus closes the opening section of the Sermon on the Mount with a declaration about the Law. He has not come to tear it down but to fill it full — to embody every longing and intention embedded in the Law and the Prophets from the beginning. This is the kingdom reading of all of Scripture: every promise, every command, every sacrifice, every prophecy finds its “yes” in him (2 Corinthians 1:20). The kingdom does not replace the story of Israel — it fulfills it. And those who belong to the kingdom are now called to a righteousness that exceeds even the most meticulous law-keeping of the scribes and Pharisees. Not because the standard is higher but because the source is different. Kingdom righteousness flows not from rule-following but from transformation — from the inside out, by the Spirit, through relationship with the King.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says he came to fulfill the Law, not abolish it — and that kingdom righteousness exceeds external rule-keeping. Where in your life is God inviting you to move from dutiful compliance to genuine heart transformation?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you fulfilled everything — every promise, every longing, every shadow and type of the Law. Your righteousness is not a heavier burden but a deeper gift. Transform us from the inside out. May the obedience of our lives flow not from duty but from love, not from fear but from the overflow of a heart changed by you. Amen.

WEEK 8

*Matthew 7:1-6 • Matthew 7:12-14 • Matthew 7:15-23 • Matthew 7:24-27 •
Matthew 7:28-29*



FULFILLMENT IN THE KINGDOM



DAY 36

Judging

Matthew 7:1–6 | Week Theme: Fulfillment in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 7:1–2 “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”

KEY INSIGHT

Jesus is not prohibiting discernment — the same passage ends with warnings about dogs, pigs, and false prophets, all of which require discernment. He is prohibiting the kind of harsh, self-righteous, hypocritical condemnation that sees clearly the speck in another’s eye while remaining blind to the log in one’s own. The kingdom person is a log-remover before they are a speck-finder. The standard is not soft — “with the measure you use it will be measured to you” is actually a call to rigorous self-examination. Kingdom community does not imply a blind eye to sin or an anything goes family. It is a zone of honest, humble, self-aware accountability. The difference between kingdom correction and hypocritical judgment is the posture of the one offering it: am I coming as a fellow sinner who has been shown mercy, or as a moral superior delivering a verdict? The log must come out first.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says we tend to notice the speck in another’s eye while missing the log in our own. Is there a relationship right now where you are more focused on the other person’s fault than on examining your own contribution? What would it look like to remove the log first?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, give us the humility to examine ourselves before we examine others. Forgive us for the ways we judge harshly what we excuse in ourselves. Make us a community of people who are quick to see our own need for grace and slow to condemn others. May our correction of one another always be seasoned with the mercy we ourselves have received. Amen.

DAY 37

The Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12–14 | Week Theme: Fulfillment in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 7:12 “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

KEY INSIGHT

Jesus distills the entire ethical vision of the Hebrew scriptures into a single, revolutionary sentence — and then immediately pairs it with a call to the narrow way. The Golden Rule is not a passive principle. It is an active posture: whatever you wish others would do to you, you do first. You go first in generosity. You go first in kindness. You go first in forgiveness. You go first in the hard conversation. This is the ethic of a kingdom where the King himself went first — “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). The narrow gate that follows is the entrance through which kingdom people pass — not because the way is obscure but because it is costly and counterintuitive. The wide road is easy. The narrow way requires the death of self-interest and the rise of other-centered love. The Golden Rule is the narrow gate in ethical form.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The Golden Rule calls us to go first — to initiate the generosity, kindness, or forgiveness we wish we would receive. In a specific relationship or situation right now, what would it look like to go first?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you went first — in love, in sacrifice, in forgiveness. You did not wait for us to deserve it. Teach us to live by that same rhythm. Where we are waiting for others to go first, give us the courage to move. Make us people who initiate grace, who lead with generosity, who choose the narrow way with joy. Amen.

DAY 38

Fruit

Matthew 7:15–23 | Week Theme: Fulfillment in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 7:17, 20 “So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit... Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”

KEY INSIGHT

Jesus offers a series of warnings about the difference between the genuine and the counterfeit. False prophets look like sheep on the outside — the diagnostic tool is not their appearance but their fruit. Character is revealed over time, under pressure, in the private spaces where no one is watching. The kingdom is not interested in performance; it is interested in formation. The tree metaphor is clarifying: you cannot produce good fruit by trying harder to produce good fruit. You produce good fruit by being a healthy tree — rooted in the right soil, drawing from the right source. Jesus’ words in John 15 make the connection explicit: abide in me (the vine) and you will bear much fruit; apart from him we can do nothing. The question is never primarily “what am I doing?” but “where am I rooted?”

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says fruit — not words or religious activity — is the true diagnostic of kingdom life. As you honestly assess the fruit of your life over the past year, what does it reveal about the health of your rootedness in Christ?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, you are the vine and we are the branches. Forgive us for the ways we try to produce fruit through effort and performance rather than through abiding in you. Deepen our roots. Prune what needs pruning. We want to be genuinely fruitful, not just impressively busy. Let our lives bear the fruit of a tree planted by living water. Amen.

DAY 39

Foundation Building

Matthew 7:24–27 | Week Theme: Fulfillment in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 7:24–25 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”

KEY INSIGHT

The Sermon on the Mount ends not with information but with a choice. Both builders hear the same words. Both face the same storm. The difference is not intelligence or effort but foundation. Jesus is not offering a technique for storm avoidance — he is offering a foundation for storm survival. The storm is coming. He says so twice, describing it in identical terms for both the wise and foolish builder. Kingdom life does not promise the absence of difficulty; it promises a foundation that holds when everything else is shaking. To “hear and do” is the whole of the call — not to merely admire the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, not to write books about it, not to preach it — but to build your daily life on it, brick by ordinary brick, in the unsexy, unglamorous, daily obedience that constitutes a rock-solid life.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Jesus says both builders hear the same words — the difference is whether they build on them. What is one specific teaching from the Sermon on the Mount (or from this 40-day journey) that you have heard but not yet fully built your life on? What would it look like to start building today?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, we want to be wise builders. Not just hearers, not just admirers, but doers. Show us where the foundation of our lives is sand — where we have heard your word but not built on it. Give us the courage and the consistency to build on the rock, day by ordinary day. When the storms come, may what we have built hold. Amen.

DAY 40

The Authority of the King

Matthew 7:28–29 | Week Theme: Fulfillment in the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE ANCHOR

Matthew 7:28–29 *And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.*

KEY INSIGHT

Matthew’s closing note on the Sermon on the Mount is an astonishment report. The crowds had heard teachers their whole lives — scribes who quoted other scholars, built arguments on precedent, and carefully hedged their claims. Jesus spoke differently. He did not cite sources. He said: “You have heard it said... but I say to you.” The authority in his voice was not the borrowed authority of scholarship or tradition — it was the intrinsic authority of the one who authored the Law in the first place. This is the final word of the 40-day journey: the kingdom belongs to a King, and the King has spoken. Everything we have explored — from Genesis 1 to Daniel 7, from the Beatitudes to the Sermon’s conclusion — finds its coherence in him. He is not one teacher among many. He is the one to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given. And he invites us to build our lives on what he has said.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The crowds were “astonished” at Jesus’ authority. As you close this 40-day journey, where has Jesus’ authority over your life grown — and what is the one area where you most need to place yourself freshly under his lordship?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you speak with the authority of the King of the kingdom. We have heard your words over these forty days. Now we ask for the grace to live them — not as a burden but as the most alive, most free, most fully human way to exist. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. In us, through us, for the world you love. Forever and ever. Amen.
