

What is the Kingdom Like: Part 6

We have been studying various aspects of the Kingdom of God and over the past 3 weeks we have focused on the fact that the Kingdom of God is founded on righteousness and is a kingdom for the righteous. We have learned the following: the Father has extended to us the scepter of righteousness (who is Jesus); His righteousness has been given to us as a gift; and we come to practically experience His righteousness by considering ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (**Romans 6:8-11**). And it all comes down to faith. Just like when we first chose to believe, we are commanded to **now** believe that we are dead to sin and alive to God. Practically, His Name gives us every reason to stop presenting our bodies to sin and our members as instruments of unrighteousness, for His Name provides an alternative choice to every lustful, dishonorable, covetous, greedy, selfish, and fearful desire in our body. Jesus is our answer: always has been and always will be.

But as we know, having an answer—even the right answer—never seems to be enough for us to just set aside the demands of our *flesh*. In fact, even an amazing promise as we find in **Matthew 5:6**: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied,” is not enough for us to choose His righteousness above our *flesh*. Can you imagine? God promises that we will be satisfied; in the Greek, literally filled to an abundance. The *flesh* never satisfies, but we can be if we now and continually (*present active participle*) hunger (which literally means to crave and pine for) and thirst for His righteousness. Who doesn't want to be satisfied? What about the promise in **Psalms 34:15**, “The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry.” Now that is powerful!

Is this promise enough for you? What about the promise in **2 Chronicles 16:9**? “The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” Does this stir within you the motivation to present yourself to God as one alive from the dead and to stop presenting yourself to sin?

Sadly, these promises do not seem to be enough to truly motivate us to choose. What are we to do? We are so weak and inconsistent it is sickening. We may want to know and experience the righteousness of God so we can live like true citizens of the Kingdom and enjoy the blessings of the Father, but unless we *desire* God and His righteousness above all that the kingdom of this world has to offer, I am afraid that we will always return to our vomit, so to speak. In fact, some of you are constantly feasting on a steady supply of your own vomit as you go back to the filth of your *flesh* over and over again.

Hence, God commands us in **Matthew 6:33** to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. He even links this command to the provision of such things as food and clothing—the staples of life—which we always seem to worry and obsess over. He says it will be added to you if you seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness. By implication, I believe His promise can be extended even to such things as relationships and other core necessities of our being. But, again, He wants you to seek first, above all else, His kingdom. In this passage He literally commands you to take no thought about your life for the Father will care of you as He takes care of the birds of the air and clothes with fine raiment the flowers of the field. And Jesus says you are far more important to the Father than such things. But He wants you to take your mind off of yourself and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

And when He says “first,” the Greek literally means above all else. First in time, first in place, first in order, and first in importance. And just so you know, this idea to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness is a Hebraism for the true worship of God. It is a similitude. This is where presenting ourselves to God as those alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God is very practical and the choices that are set before us are more than difficult. What comes first in your life? What do you hunger and pine after? What do you thirst for? The answer to this question is really quite easy to assess. Hang around a person, for even a very short period of time, and you can surmise the answer. If the righteousness of God is not something that is readily recognizable in your life, then it is clear you prioritize many other things ahead of God. You have failed the test of genuine faith and are living as one who is not approved of by God (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). In essence, you love this life and this world more than you love God, His kingdom, and His righteousness.

Ok, you can admit that God does not have that place of priority—first in all things. You admit that you still seek to be satisfied by things in this world ahead of being satisfied by God. You still think that a man or a woman, children, or the right job and a filled bank account will satisfy you plenty. Yeah, you know God has great stuff for you, but for now those few things are enough. At the same time, you hate that part of you; you’re ashamed of these things and hate to admit how much they control you. Yet, you feel stuck and don’t know what to do. You want His promises to be fully realized in your life. You have tasted of His fruit and it is more than delicious. But you don’t seem to be able to sustain the experience very long. You hate the thought that you don’t really love Him more than this world and all the

things your body craves; but again, you feel stuck. You have tried to change your attitude, you have tried to let your *flesh* die, you have asked God to kill it, you have “repented” time after time, but for some God awful reason you are still the same.

I am not saying this to guilt or shame you; but you need to be honest about the true condition of your relationship with God. Many of you have yet to learn what it is like to truly abide in the love of God; accordingly, you only kind of love God. If you truly loved Him, you would abide in Him and His righteousness and His love would flow from you (***John 15:10; 1 John 3:16, 24***); and everyone would know it.

Now don't lose hope, there is good news. After all, very few people fall in love at first sight (it's kind of a misnomer). Rather, love is an acquired experience that can be nurtured and grown over time into something quite large and powerful. The biggest factors which aid to our “falling in love” tends to be proximity, which breeds familiarity, similarity, and comfort. We have talked about this before. People talk about falling in love at first sight, but it is really just an intense attraction to someone's extreme hotness. True love is so much more.

For example, an attractive person may catch your attention at your favorite coffee shop, but if you never see them again, they just tend to slip out of your mind; you forget about them. But if you ensure that you are at that coffee shop at the same time the next day and the next, and you see them day-after-day—if the initial stimuli is reinforced—the attraction tends to intensify. You see, proximity breeds familiarity, which increases the chance of actually falling in love. In fact, researchers conclude that those who say they fell in love at first sight were just so immediately attracted and available that in a short amount of time they spent a lot of time with that person, with the result being a sense of true love. You see, familiarity breeds

comfort and a sense of closeness, which increases romance potential. That is why researchers say that being in love is actually about gradually getting to know someone over time versus the initial reaction to their hotness.

We have talked about love and proximity before, but with what God is taking us through and what He is trying to instill in this body, we need to revisit this very practical truth. And it is all tied to this whole idea of presenting yourself to Him as one alive from the dead; and it is all very, very practical. If you are not living in **proximity** with Him, spending **undistracted** time with Him so you can get to know Him and become intimately familiar with His ways, I believe you are going to remain stuck and your relationship will never venture into the romance of love (which is another way of saying that you will never hunger, pine, crave and thirst for His righteousness). I know many of you read your Bibles and the studies we have done, but you have to be honest about whether you are studying to get to know Him or if you are just reading to fit into the Pathway culture or perhaps, more honestly, to get Him to do or fix something for you. This distinction means everything.

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. This command means He must be prioritized above all those things in this world that you love and want; it is a choice of obedience. However, it takes time for Him to truly become your priority—your true love where you just long for Him. It is an acquired experience. But I want you to keep in mind the following: You must first be **intentional**. If you don't seek Him out, there is a very good chance that you will not find Him. Jesus says, "I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me" (**Proverbs 8:17**). Like the person in the coffee shop, if you don't make it a point to be there day-after-day when they are there, your initial attraction will probably not grow very far. You

must diligently seek Him out and He will meet you there.

Second, you must be **undistracted**. If you want the person in the coffee shop to pay attention to you, you must be focused and not pulled to someone or something else. You must position yourself accordingly and you must not be too distracted with your coffee, other people, or just the thoughts in your head, or else you will miss that special moment they look your way. Jesus says in **Jeremiah 29:13**, “You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.” Turn your whole heart toward Him and stay focused and undistracted and you will find Him.

Third, you must be **consistent**. Let’s say you have been intentional (you put the vibe out), were undistracted (you made eye contact at the perfect time), then you must also be consistent. If the next day you are caught looking at someone else when they are looking at you, it is probably over. They need to know they were not just a one-time-deal; they want you to pursue them over and over again. Consistency is an ongoing demand when it comes to falling in love. Hence, diligently “seek” in **Proverbs 8:17** is a participle. You must seek and seek and seek and seek.

If you are **intentional, undistracted, and consistent** with a person, these factors will breed familiarity. After all, you will be in the best position to learn something about that other person and explore your similarities. Not surprisingly, researchers will tell you that the combination of familiarity and similarity makes you feel comfortable. If you saw an apple anywhere in the world, you would probably feel comfortable eating it. But if you saw a Rambutan (native only to Malaysia) or Durian (unique to South East Asia), believe me, you would have no idea what these fruits are and tend to walk away from it. Thus, you need attraction, growing familiarity, some element of similarity, and then you will have the potential of falling in love.

Therefore, if you are stuck and feel sick and tired of living for your *flesh*, eating from your own vomit, but don't have the "umph" to choose to live in His righteousness, then understand these to be very real and practical steps you can take and must take if you ever want to be one who is satisfied and in love.

Consider this testimony about David from **Acts 13:22**, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will." Clearly, David sought God, wanted to be like God, wanted what God wanted, and would live His life accordingly. That is a pretty impressive testimony coming from God. Can you imagine that being said about you? Surely David did not just pop out of the womb like this; after all, he was just like you and me. However, somewhere along the path he looked at the direction of his life and chose God. He subsequently fell in love and decided that God's will for his life was far better than his own. We are going to explore this relational transformation of David by going through a significant portion of **Psalm 119**, for I believe it holds the secret as to why David fell in love with God and forsook his own way. I also believe you will find that David chose to be **intentional, undistracted, and consistent** in his pursuit of God and the payoff for him was the blessing of God and a fulfillment of the promises of God in his life.

Psalm 119:1-3

How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.
How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart. They also do no unrighteousness; they walk in His ways.

David starts with the result. The fruit of seeking God, knowing God, and being in love with Him, is that you will be blessed, will do no unrighteousness, and will walk in His ways. In other words, the fruit of loving God is that like Jesus you will love righteousness and hate lawlessness. And that is actually a peculiar thing about falling in love, over time you inevitably become like the person with whom you are in love. It happened with David and it will happen with you. In **1 Corinthians 1:30**, we are told that Jesus became to us wisdom from God, and *righteousness* and sanctification, and redemption. And the fruit of our loving God is that we will truly become like Him. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might dig down deep into our soul and always choose, as a matter of lifestyle, to be the righteousness of God in Him. Yes, we are to be the righteousness of God, just like Jesus is righteous; it is how we know we are born of Him (**1 John 2:29**). We just need to seek Him with all our heart.

Psalm 119:9-16, 72

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You. Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word... Your instructions are more valuable to me than millions in gold and silver.

Here we start to make a connection between David's love for the Word of God and the righteousness in which he lived. He says, "With all my heart I have sought You." Practically, how did he do this? He meditated on the Word and treasured the Word in his heart; it was precious to him and he delighted in all that he learned about God. Then he regarded the Word, meaning he did not just quickly read it and move on with his day. He took it seriously and chose to apply it in his life. Moreover, knowing about the tendency to get busy and forget what he studied, David continually talked about the Word and kept it fresh in his soul. He also rejoiced and delighted in all that he had learned about God. He compared it to the joy in heart of having tons of riches; in fact, he considered knowing God as more valuable than millions in gold and silver. This was David's relationship with the Word and it played out in his becoming one who was blessed of God and truly satisfied.

Psalm 119:19-20, 23-24

I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me. My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times...Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes. Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors.

David knew he was an alien and stranger in this world; he knew he did not belong. And while people talked bad about him, when things of this life stressed him out, he went to the Word. This word translated as "meditate" means that he didn't just read it; rather, he pondered what it meant for him, he had a discussion

within himself about God and who God was to him. David took great delight in his studies because he found his greatest counsel and advice in the Word. He was not left wondering, he was not hopeless or lost; God met David in the Word. Look at what David says, “My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times.” He sounds just like a man in love. He is obsessed and his whole being aches, all the time, over everything about his lover. It did not start this way, but this is what his commitment to the Word of God developed in him—a deep, deep longing where he hungered and thirst for the righteousness of God.

Psalm 119:27-30, 33-35

Help me understand the meaning of your commandments, and I will meditate on your wonderful deeds. I weep with sorrow; encourage me by your word. Keep me from lying to myself; give me the privilege of knowing your instructions. I have chosen to be faithful; I have determined to live by your regulations. Teach me your decrees, O Lord; I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart. Make me walk along the path of your commands, for that is where my happiness is found.

David desperately wanted to understand the mysteries of God; he wanted to be one who holds dear in his soul the secrets of God. He cried out: help me understand; give me the privilege of knowing; teach me; and give me understanding. David constantly meditated on the ways of God seeking this

understanding; and when he observed the wonders of God, it encouraged his soul even when he was filled with sorrow. He put in his work; he was **intentional**, **undistracted**, and **consistent** in His pursuit of knowing God.

Think about David's cry. Everyone here has been taught so much about the deep mysteries and secrets of God and have had to do little to get it. God has given us understanding of His Word, like few others; we are truly privileged. Yet, with all the amazing things God has taught us, so few of you have actually meditated on those truths, studied them, and internalized them as if they were your food. Some of you have and it is very evident, but this is something we must now do as a body. I am afraid we, as a body, are still too weak; we need to be strengthened by the Word.

David dug down deep into his soul and made the choice to be faithful, to put into practice all that he learned. He decided to keep the Lord's instructions all throughout his life; for him there was no turning back to the vomit of his *flesh*. He came to understand that true happiness and contentment is not found in romance, riches, fame, security, glory, or in anything of this world; but only in the Word of God. You must believe this to be true and make a similar decision. It's the decision that God wants you to make so I know it is the decision He has provisioned you to make. But you must dedicate yourself to study, meditate, put in the work and then keep the Lord's instructions.

Psalm 119:43-48

Do not snatch your word of truth from me, for your regulations are my only hope. I will keep on obeying your instructions forever and ever. I will walk in freedom,

for I have devoted myself to your commandments. I will speak to kings about your laws, and I will not be ashamed. How I delight in your commands! How I love them! I honor and love your commands. I meditate on your decrees.

Wow, this is amazing. In the living and abiding Word of God, David experienced hope, freedom, boldness (or the lack of shame), honor, and love. The tangible blessing, the benefit of meditating on the Word of God and devoting yourself to the Lord's commandments, seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, is nothing short of overwhelming and impacts your heart, mind, soul, and strength. I want you to understand that this is how David lived. He was not writing after hearing some good sermon where he felt convicted and dedicated himself to trying once again to do it right. No, this was the life he chose to live; it was his identity.

Psalm 119:52-58

I meditate on your age-old regulations; O Lord, they comfort me. I become furious with the wicked, because they reject your instructions. Your decrees have been the theme of my songs wherever I have lived. I reflect at night on who you are, O Lord; therefore, I obey your instructions. This is how I spend my life: obeying your commandments. Lord, you are mine! I promise to obey your words! With all my heart I want your blessings.

What can you add to that; maybe a "Wow" or an "Amen"? David dedicated himself to the Word of God and it became his life—the song of his heart. He learned

about God, reflected upon him day and night, and then lived it all out. Oh I wish every one of us could say: “Lord, you are mine!” “Mine!” David even internalized the Word to such an extent that he became furious with those who rejected God’s instructions. He owned the truth; it became his truth, and the truth comforted him.

Psalm 119:59-63, 79

I pondered the direction of my life, and I turned to follow your laws. I will hurry, without delay, to obey your commands. Evil people try to drag me into sin, but I am firmly anchored to your instructions. I rise at midnight to thank you for your just regulations. I am a friend to anyone who fears you—anyone who obeys your commandments...Let me be united with all who fear you, with those who know your laws.

It is clear that David had to learn how to be in love with God. At some point in his life he realized the futility of his ways, direction, and his own demands for his life. Thus, he finally chose to follow God. He made the choice with his whole heart, which is why he said he will hurry without delay to obey the Lord. David even became stubborn about it; he would not budge nor retreat. He was anchored to the Word of God. Day and night his thoughts were of the magnificence of God. His love for God even redefined all his relationships. He desired unity in relationship with those who were like minded and sought the Lord to provide for him in those relationships. If you remember, he said he was furious with those who did not actually want God, but he considered anyone to be a friend who would fear God,

love His Word, and follow Him, like David, with his heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Psalm 119:89-93, 114

Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven. Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created. Your regulations remain true to this day, for everything serves your plans. If your instructions hadn't sustained me with joy, I would have died in my misery. I will never forget your commandments, for by them you give me life...You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my source of hope.

The Word of God was life to David. The scriptures were more than just words in a book; more than just amazing stories; and more than powerful instruction; it was life. The Word of God in David's heart and mind sustained him and filled him with hope even when his emotions were all jacked up and he thought he would die in his misery. You have to understand, the Word of God is more powerful than our feelings, more powerful than the cries of our body, and from generation to generation it stands firm in heaven. In other words, if it was life to David, it can be life to you. You are not an exception.

Psalm 119:97-104, 113

Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide. Yes, I have more insight than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your laws. I am even

wiser than my elders, for I have kept your commandments. I have refused to walk on any evil path, so that I may remain obedient to your word. I haven't turned away from your regulations, for you have taught me well. How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey. Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life... I hate those with divided loyalties, but I love your instructions.

Nothing compares to the living Word of God. It will guide you to explore the depths of understanding, it will protect you from evil, and in its practical application you will learn wisdom. Did you notice David refused to walk on any evil path, which would include the evil paths of self-love and self-pity. It was not worth it to David. After all, his time with God was delicious, so delicious that he literally hated all that was not God. This is the essence of true faith and the fear of the Lord. David actively believed the truth and rejected all else. I believe he was able to live this way because he purposed himself with all **intention** to abide in the Word. He remained **undistracted**, even when he was busy doing his king thing; and he was **consistent**, Day and night he meditated on the Word.

Psalm 119:105, 111-112, 127-128, 130, 133

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path...Your laws are my treasure; they are my heart's delight. I am determined to keep your decrees to the very end....Truly, I love your commands more than gold, even the finest gold. Each of your commandments is right. That is why I hate every false way...The

teaching of your word gives light, so even the simple can understand...I pant with expectation, longing for your commands. Guide my steps by your word so I will not be overcome by evil.

Do you feel stuck not knowing how to go forward with God, not knowing how to discard the demands of your *flesh*? Then let the light of the Word of God guide and illuminate your steps. You have sat under some incredible teaching and the Lord has given you understanding. With all you have learned about the *flesh*, the **New Creation**, faith, the fear of the Lord, living in hope, and so on, you can go to the Word and it will teach you. Expect God to meet you; expect His Word to show you how not to be overcome by evil; and then refuse to walk on any evil path. Oh that your hearts would long and yearn for His Word. Crave it, pine for it, and believe me you won't be stuck any longer.

Psalm 119:138, 140, 143, 147-148

Your laws are perfect and completely trustworthy...Your promises have been thoroughly tested; that is why I love them so much... As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands... I rise early, before the sun is up; I cry out for help and put my hope in your words. I stay awake through the night, thinking about your promise.

It does not matter what life throws at you, the solution is always the same. As pressure mounted, David did not give himself to his coping mechanisms; rather, he

turned to the Lord and found joy. In fact, David sounds pretty obsessed here. Day and night he turned to the Lord; he really loved the promises of God. I remember years ago my closest friend said that I was becoming too obsessed, for all I did was talk about God and I needed to chill and broaden my interests, for people were talking. Well now she is obsessed, and that is all she talks about; and guess what, people now talk about her. That is because the promises of God have been thoroughly tested in her life and God has proved Himself faithful. Likewise, the promises of God have been given to you in abundance and are experienced through the true knowledge of Jesus Christ so that you might become a partaker of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust (**2 Peter 1:2-4**). God's promises will always prove to be true and completely trustworthy.

Psalm 119:159-162, 167-168

See how I love your commandments, Lord. Give back my life because of your unfailing love. The very essence of your words is truth; all your just regulations will stand forever. Powerful people harass me without cause, but my heart trembles only at your word. I rejoice in your word like one who discovers a great treasure. I have obeyed your laws, for I love them very much. Yes, I obey your commandments and laws because you know everything I do.

David constantly declares his love for the Lord. David had many enemies on this earth, but he was not afraid of man. His heart trembled at the Word of God, for he knew the riches contained in the Word—to him they were like a great treasure.

And what is so refreshing is that David was not responding to God out of his goodness, obligation, nor out of fear, but he truly, sincerely, loved the Lord. And it is clear that the more he learned about God the more he fell in love.

Psalm 119:172, 174-175

Let my tongue sing about your word, for all your commands are right. O Lord, I have longed for your rescue, and your instructions are my delight. Let me live so I can praise you, and may your regulations help me.

If you choose to be ***intentional*** about spending time with God in order to know Him; if you choose to be ***undistracted*** and night and day meditate on His word, think about Him, and consider the magnificence of His character; and if you choose to be ***consistent*** in this relationship, then I know you will fall completely in love with Jesus and you too will be obsessed and you will want only Him. You will crave Him. You will freely give up your idolatry (whether it is of yourself or of others), you will freely discard the lusts which cry out to you from this world, you will hate all that is not God, and you will delight and rejoice in Him. You will discover how delicious time with Him truly is. You will be a lover which is what the Father has always wanted for His Son. This is your pathway to victory and your pathway to the righteousness of God flowing from your life. Be stuck no longer!

Again, this is something God wants for this body; it is a place of maturity for which He longs. He wants us to all be anchored in His Word and thereby be fully satisfied.

Let's Pray