

DISCIPLESHIP COURSE

An Invitation to Follow

PART 9 | CONTINUING | EXPANDING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

"Every time we live and love like Jesus, we advance the kingdom of heaven."

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus came and began a work - ushering in the kingdom of heaven, raising up disciples, and sending them out to continue what he started. When he left, he handed the baton to his followers. The book of Acts is the story of that continuation. And now it's our turn.

To be a disciple of Jesus is not just to believe the right things or be personally formed - it's to continue the ministry of Jesus. We are called to expand the kingdom: living as citizens of heaven, in a world that doesn't yet fully know its king.

KEY SCRIPTURES

John 14:12

"Anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done - and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father."

Matthew 10:7-8

"Go and announce to them that the kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received."

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

A kingdom is simply a king's domain - a place where a king's influence, will, and authority is exercised. The kingdom of heaven is wherever people come under God's influence, will, and authority. It is both a present reality and a future hope.

N.T. Wright

New Testament Scholar

"The kingdom of God is not a place, but a reality in which God's reign is realized in the present and future. It is breaking into the world now and will one day be fully consummated in new creation."

Dallas Willard

Theologian & Philosopher

"The kingdom of heaven is not about getting into heaven after you die, but entering into God's rule now in this life and allowing it to transform the world around you."

John Calvin

Reformation Theologian

"The kingdom of God is wherever God's will is done and where his law reigns supreme. It is both a present reality and a future hope."

"The kingdom of heaven is anywhere people submit and come under God's influence, will and authority — and it is near."

FOUR WAYS WE CONTINUE JESUS' MINISTRY

In Matthew 10, Jesus sent out his disciples with four specific commissions. These same four marks shaped the New Testament church - and they still define kingdom expansion today:

Declare the Kingdom

Tell people the kingdom of heaven is near — they can come under God's influence, will, and authority. Share your story of what Jesus has done in your life.

Pray for the Sick

Jesus healed people and commissioned his disciples to do the same. Prayer for the sick is an act of kingdom expansion — bringing God's rule into situations of suffering.

Cast Out Darkness

Jesus confronted spiritual darkness and gave his disciples the same authority. We live as people who know that the kingdom of light is more powerful than the kingdom of darkness.

Serve the Poor

Generosity and service to the vulnerable is a hallmark of kingdom life. Give as freely as you have received — this is the king's way.

WHAT ADVANCING THE KINGDOM LOOKS LIKE DAY-TO-DAY

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) is the king's decree - Jesus describing what life in his kingdom looks like. Every time we live this way, we expand his kingdom in the world around us:

- ✓ Trusting Jesus over yourself
- ✓ Giving mercy instead of judgment
- ✓ Making peace instead of holding a grudge
- ✓ Remaining steadfast in faith when persecuted
- ✓ Living by Jesus' ethics instead of the world's

- ✓ Serving the poor
- ✓ Forgiving those who hurt you
- ✓ Covering someone's sin with grace instead of judging them
- ✓ Giving generously to those around you
- ✓ Choosing to love and forgive someone in the church who has offended you

None of these require a platform or a title. They happen in homes, workplaces, neighbourhoods, and conversations - one kingdom moment at a time.

THE FRUIT OF THE KINGDOM

Paul writes that the kingdom of God is not about external things - it's about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). These are the very things the world is hungry for. When we live as citizens of God's kingdom, we don't just obey a set of rules - we carry something real that others can experience and receive.

"The world is longing for righteousness, peace, and joy. When we expand the kingdom, we're not just living differently - we're inviting others into something they were made for."

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. In your own words, how would you explain what the "kingdom of heaven" means to someone who had never heard of it?
2. Look at the four commissions in Matthew 10. Which of these feels most natural to you - and which feels furthest from your current life?
3. Scan the list of kingdom moments above. Which ones are you already living - and which ones challenge you most?
4. Is there someone in your life you could invite into the kingdom this week? What would it look like to share your story - what you've witnessed Jesus do in your life?