

Kingdom Come

(McNeal)

Summary

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last update

18 Jul 2016

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**Kingdom Come:
Why We Must Give Up Our Obsession with Fixing
the Church-and What We Should Do Instead**
Reggie McNeal

Thesis:

- Christ not only saved us **from** something, He saved us **for** something (the work of the Kingdom). When we respond to Jesus' call to live as Kingdom agents everywhere we go, we will experience the joy of seeing God at work.
- The purpose of the church is to further God's Kingdom. Aligning the church with the Kingdom will both serve the community and save the church from missional irrelevance.

Note: Helping everyone become an outward-focused follower of Jesus is consistent with Kingdom thinking.

Missional Thinking

Church is a Verb

For missional thinkers, church is a verb, a way of being in the world. Wherever Christ-followers go in covenant with God, the church is. Being church means finding organic ways to express our relationship with God. It means we see all of life as a mission trip.

Missional church seeks to live out our relationship with God by finding ways to bless people, both corporately (as groups of people) and individually. When we are faithful at being church, we point people to the Kingdom. Church is a mission-centered relationship.

The Kingdom is about abundant life. Kingdom life is a life of good deeds and service to others. In giving away our lives, we gain them back. We pass from death to life as we help others do the same.

When We Lost Our Focus

In the 20th century, mainline denominations drifted away from the spiritual emphasis in their social ministries. At the same time, evangelicals drifted away from the social arena. Both fell short of speaking the truth in love (**Eph 4:15**).

	Truth	Love	
Mainline	weak	strong	Loved people without telling them the whole Truth.
Evangelical	strong	weak	Told the Truth while neglecting love.

Kingdom Tales

The Kingdom of God is distinct from any human kingdom in two critically important ways:

1. It is eternal (**Psa 145:13**).
2. It is not terrestrial in origin (**John 18:36**).

The Kingdom of God is similar to human kingdoms in three key ways:

1. It is noticeable on earth (**Mat 6:10**).
2. It reflects the character of the king who sits on the throne (**Psa 145**).
3. It is engaged in a struggle with enemies.

Grand, Heroic Story

The Kingdom narrative is the grand, heroic story of what God has done, and will do, to bring about the fulfillment of His plan and purpose for the universe.

Humans have a unique place in Creation. God spoke all things into existence except for human beings. After he molded Adam, He breathed life into him (**Gen 2:7**).

Wherever there is a demonstration of goodness, mercy, faithfulness, compassion, justice, righteousness, or love, those elements participate in the Kingdom whether consciously and intentionally or not.

Sin Diminishes Life

God created us to have an abundant life (**John 10:10**). It is easy to observe that, life, as we currently know it, is not the life God intends.

When Adam and Eve chose evil over good, sin went to work against life. It began to damage everything in Creation and resulted in our estrangement from God and one another. This is why we experience pain, frustration, anxiety, guilt, hatred, and other toxic emotions.

Ultimate Triumph

John saw a vision of the ultimate triumph of God's Kingdom.

- A river flowing with the water of life (**Rev 22:1**)
- A tree of life growing on each side (**Rev 22:2**)
- Free access to the water of life (**Rev 22:17**)
- The tree of life continually bearing fruit (**Rev 22:2**)
- The absence of the curse of sin (**Rev 22:3**)

Jesus and the Kingdom

Jesus' primary mission was to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom (**Luke 4:43** and **John 1:4**).

Jesus used metaphors to help us comprehend aspects of the Kingdom of God.

- Wedding feast: There will be great diversity in the Kingdom and exceeding joy (**Mat 8:11** and **Mat 22:2-10**).
- Seed-scattering farmer: God is determined to get the seed out to provide opportunity for abundant life (**Mat 13:3-9** and **18-23Eph 4:15**).
- Field of wheat and weeds: In our present age, there are two rival kingdoms in the world.

Weeding now would limit the harvest (**Mat 13:24-30**).

- Mustard seed: The Kingdom is an expanding realm (**Mat 13:31-32**).
- Little yeast: The presence of the Kingdom infiltrates and influences every aspect of life (**Mat 13:33**).
- Hidden treasure and valuable pearl: Having the Kingdom is worth everything in life (**Mat 13:44-46**).
- Fishing net: Currently on earth, the good and bad fish swim together. At the end, God will separate them.
- Ten bridesmaids: Some are prepared to enter the Kingdom and others are not (**Mat 25:1-13**).
- Three servants: Those who invest in the Kingdom will receive celebration and reward (**Mat 25:14-30**).

It's a Choice

- God is eager for us to experience the Kingdom (**Luke 12:32**).
- We each must decide whether we want to be in or out of the Kingdom (**Luke 13:23-27**).

Heroic Kingdom Narrative

- We seek to make sense of our lives because God designed us to yearn to experience the Kingdom (**Php 3:12**).
- The Kingdom of God is a mission. It is about living the truth as well as speaking the truth.
- All efforts that enhance life as God intends are Kingdom efforts.
- People who enhance life contribute to the Kingdom enterprise, even if they are unaware of it (the Good Samaritan).
- Our King routinely turns the tables on the enemy's strategies to make Kingdom advances (Joseph, **Gen 50:20**).
- The Kingdom belongs to the King (**Rom 8:28**).
- Kingdom timelines run longer than a single human lifespan. Our job is to be obedient and play our respective roles
- The Kingdom is always expanding. Instead of holding retreats, we should be holding advances.
- Kingdom victory is assured. We can celebrate, regardless of our immediate circumstances.
- The battle will not go on forever. There will come a time when entrance into the Kingdom is no longer possible for the unprepared (**Mat 25:1-13** and **Rev 21:27**).
- The Kingdom of God on earth is "already, but not yet." It provides evidence that the full manifestation of the Kingdom is on its way.

Challenging the Church's Storyline

- Jesus has given the church, the keys to the Kingdom (**Mat 16:13-19**). That means we are responsible for delivering Kingdom instructions and demonstrating Kingdom activity.
- The Kingdom is the destination. The church's job is to get people where God wants them to be (destination/airport analogy). We do this by helping them grow in their character and competency as disciples (**Eph 4:11-16**).
- We are responsible for helping people see their lives as a mission trip.

It is God's job to judge, the Spirit's job to convict, and our job to love. -Billy

- We are to focus on the welfare of our community (**Jer 29:7**).
- Is it easier for people to hear the gospel if we demonstrate the gospel in action.
- God's people still need leaders to teach them, care for them, and remind them of their mission.
- God's people still need to worship God together and support others in their service to the King around the world.

Aiding and Abetting the Kingdom

- People living out a Kingdom-focused narrative don't compartmentalize their lives. For them, every activity and relationship is an opportunity to be a person of blessing, to help people know God and enjoy the life He wants for them.
- Missio Dei (God's Mission): The world is the target of God's redemptive mission. The Holy Spirit birthed the church and gives us the power to fulfill our role in the Kingdom saga.
- Church Expression: We are to be a people of blessing who embody the mission of God so that people can understand who He is and connect with life as He intends (**Gen 12:1-2**).
- Priesthood of All Believers: As priests, we are to offer spiritual sacrifices and show others the goodness of God (**1Pet 2:5-9**).
- Church Programming: Our focus should be to develop and deploy missional Jesus-followers,

compassionate believer-priests who are equipped to serve as Kingdom agents.

- Spiritual Formation: Loving God and others are foundational to spiritual formation (**Luke 10:37**). Helping others develops empathy and compassion.
- Good Works: God saved us from our sins, through the work of Jesus on the cross, to do good works (**Eph 2:8-10**).

The search for abundant life inevitably leads to Jesus because He is the Life. The search for truth leads to Jesus because He is the Truth. The search for love leads to

Kingdom Collaboration

Preconditions for Effective Community Collaborative Initiatives

1. Convener: There must be someone who is able to get the right people into the room.
2. Influential Champion(s): There must be one or more respected people who others will follow.
3. Adequate Financial Resources: There must be startup funds to get the initiative started.
4. Sense of Urgency: People must be aware of and extremely concerned about the problem.
5. Conversation Coach: There must be someone who can help the group focus on key elements and guide their discussion.

Conditions for Collective Impact

1. Common Agenda: There must be a shared vision for change and agreement on a joint action approach.
2. Shared Measurements: There must be a common set of measures to track performance, maintain accountability, and celebrate progress.
3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities: Mutually reinforcing activities allow different domains to make distinct contributions to the overall goal.
4. Continuous Communication: To keep people involved, you must keep the initiative in front of them. Using a variety pathways is best (website, social media, print, face-to-face).

5. Backbone Support: There must be staff and resources to handle project management and communication.

Expect Twists and Turns

- Expect some push back from those whose mindsets are firmly church-centered.
- Beware of non-collaborators who position themselves for control through forming coalitions or sabotaging others.
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Find out what helpful things are already in place. Intentionally, collaborate with the leaders of those efforts and leverage what they have instead of creating something new.
- Engage those you are serving to help you understand the true needs. Strive to do things **with** them instead of **for** them. Tap into their time, talent, and insights.
- Don't let analysis paralysis keep you from getting started. Take some action.
- Find a place to start. Schools are often a good place to begin.
- Be willing to serve the schools in a small way of their choosing to get the process started. Assume a servant posture.
- Expect collaboration to be messy. Be prepared to navigate distractions, competing agendas, control issues, and differing value systems.

Making the Move

How you live your life and what you choose as your leadership focus are decisions only you can make.

To transform a culture, you must be willing to make some changes yourself.

Begin to Speak "Kingdom"

Change your language patterns to include the following:

- The Kingdom of God is life as God intends it.
- The church is the people of God partnering with Him in the redemptive mission in the world.
- Church is not about a place or a program. It is about being in relationship with God and humanity.
- God wants us to be people of blessing ([Gen 12:1-2](#)).
- Every Christ-follower is a priest in God's Kingdom.

- Life is a mission trip (metaphor for why and how God wants us to live our lives).
- Use “the” church to mean the one Jesus established (worldwide).
- Use the word congregation to refer to a specific gathering of the church.
- Tell stories of the Kingdom (ways in which God has revealed Himself through people’s lives).
- Celebrate Kingdom priests who exercise their gifts out in the world.

Change Your Measures

Measure and reward those things that promote Kingdom thinking. Here are some examples:

- Percent of regular attendees who are actively deployed in the community during the week.
- Number of hungry kids receiving food.
- Number of community service volunteer hours per person (overall ratio metric).
- Number of people becoming Christ-followers.

Assess the following areas to see where you could be more Kingdom focused:

- Website
- Print media
- Weekly announcements
- Sermon/message content
- Budget allocations
- Staffing allocations

Lead the Way

1. Go first. Get involved in some local community development initiatives.
2. Don’t go it alone. Take an apprentice with you when you participate in community service.
3. Make heroes of the right people. Look for those serving your community (both inside and outside your congregation) and recognize them.
4. Be prepared for conflict and resistance.
5. Educate yourself about change and transition leadership.
6. Sing your song. You must believe in what you are doing before you can convince others.
7. Pay attention to what breaks your heart. This insight can give you the passion and energy to be an effective Kingdom priest.
8. Become employable. Don’t put yourself in a position where you feel trapped. Develop your transferable skills to increase your options.
9. Be patient with yourself and others. Change takes time.
10. Face your fears. God understands your predicament and He is with you. That is why, “fear not” is the most frequent command in Scripture.

The best strategy for leading those around you into the Kingdom sage is for you to “get it” and “live it” yourself.

What Now?

Suggestions for Church Ministry Leaders

- Pray with greater Kingdom consciousness. Ask God to open your eyes to see what He sees and to open your heart to care about the same things He does.
- Find other people with the Kingdom perspective. Collaborate with them. (both inside and outside your congregation)
- Start new conversations with community leaders to identify needs. Keep your eyes, ears, and heart open to opportunities to collaborate with them. Ask them how you could pray for them in their leadership role.
- Get outside your congregation more often.
- Pick a small, sure-win project to build momentum. (a clean-up day, appreciation dinner for emergency responders, a teacher move-in support day)
- Rethink and redesign your church-ministry programs to reflect a Kingdom bias. Make a series of small, incremental adjustments. Use your website as a portal for community volunteering.
- Make sure that every ministry is growing in its Kingdom bias.
- Involve your inner circle in the Kingdom conversation.

Suggestions for Jesus-Followers

- Don't wait for the world to change. Begin with yourself.
 - Order your prayer life around the Kingdom. Ask God to show you what's happening in the lives of people around you. Let the Holy Spirit guide you to pray for others.
 - Keep a 30-day journal of God sightings and Spirit nudges. Once complete, look at what you've written to see if there are patterns that might indicate something God wants you to do.
 - Invite others to socialize with you.
 - Ask yourself, "What breaks my heart?"
 - Take action on your passion or your pain. Ask God to direct you. Rearrange your priorities so that you can pursue the community service of God's choice.
- Decide on what you want to accomplish.
 - Honestly assess what you bring to the table. Find a place to serve that uses your strengths, interests, and abilities. Let God work through you.
 - Find out what you need to learn to make your best contribution.
 - Build and surround yourself with a community of like-minded people who will pray for one another and collaborate with one another.
 - Start where you are. Be willing to go; however, God may have you placed in a perfect position to establish a Kingdom work.
 - Invite non-Jesus followers into your Kingdom journey. God conversations will naturally come up as you serve alongside other people. Be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in you.

Conclusion

Far too many leaders and congregations view church as more important than God's Kingdom. They are so occupied with organizational needs that community engagement and loving one's neighbors are put aside until they take care of church business.

They don't understand that their true mission is to lead God's people to partner with Him in His redemptive efforts in the world.

Nothing less than the Kingdom of God will satisfy your dreams. He created you for the Kingdom. That is why you are desperate until you find it. Once you do, you have a responsibility to show the way to others and help them on their way to finding it.

Jesus has invited us into His own heart. It's His life that He wants us to experience. He is the way, the truth, and the life.