

Middle School October 19 & 20



When we receive the love of the Father, we enter the Kingdom of God.

Small Group

1. **Ice Breaker.** There will be some new faces this week! Here's a short activity to get everybody comfortable with each other.
2. **Discussion.** This is time to process the difference between religion and receiving God's love in order to enter the kingdom.
3. **Activity.** This is designed to help the kids process what it might look like to actually receive God's love in their day-to-day lives.
4. **Training.** This week, instead of "doing" things, we're receiving. Encourage the kids to listen to the receive CD's this week.

Ice Breaker

Before we get into anything too serious, we're going to do a little ice breaker. Come on, you know you love them. If you could live in any of the Disney movie kingdoms, which one would you choose and why?

Discussion

1. First, let's talk about the Love Experiment you did last week. For those of you who were here and tried it, go around and give a quick description of what you did (*as the leader, you should go first*).
2. In all of the experiments that we just heard, what might the recipient have felt? It doesn't have to be your own experiment for you to comment!
3. Does anyone feel like God was showing or teaching you anything about yourself through the experiment?
4. Does anyone remember the definition of religion that the presenter used?
Any man-made system that we're using to try and work our way into God's favor.
 - a. Does this help us enter the kingdom of God? Why or why not?
5. What are some ways that we might strive for approval of people or God from day to day?
6. How do we enter the kingdom of God? *Read Luke 12:32 if you're having trouble remembering.*
 - a. *We receive the love of the Father!*

7. Have any of you had experiences when you received something from your friends or family (maybe a gift, or an encouragement)? How does that make you feel?
8. Have any of you experienced receiving God's love? How did you do that? How did it make you feel?

Activity

Receiving God's love can sound simple, or you might realize that it's incredibly personal and powerful. Usually, we have an area of our life where His love could heal or change something in us. Listen to these three statements and see which one feels hardest to accept:

God will provide exactly what you need. No matter what.

God didn't make a single mistake when he created you. Not one.

God doesn't need you in order to accomplish things.

Once you've picked a statement, write it down on your notecard.

Let's brainstorm ways that these beliefs might show up in different areas of our life. For example, if you had a hard time believing God will provide for you, then you might always worry about your grades while you're at school. But maybe at home, it causes you to be waiting for the next thing to go wrong... a fight with your parents, not enough money, etc. Get it?

I'm going to say a couple areas of our lives and then if something sticks out to you or you think of a way you might not believe those statements, write it down and share with the group if you feel comfortable.

At home

With friends

At school

After-school activities

Great job, everyone! This is a great thing to keep thinking about this week.

Training

This week we're just going to work on receiving, not doing. Here's a CD for you to listen to this week. Try to listen to it two times. If you know other people who are doing the journey (friends or family), it might be cool to listen to it together! If you don't have a CD player, or it's easier for you to listen to an MP3, go to (NEED LINK!). This week is going to be awesome. I can't wait to hear how it goes!

Large Group

Welcome and Recap

Last week we talked about the difference between the kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God.

SLIDE: pictures from Kingdom week 1 representing Kingdom of God and kingdom of this world.

We said that the kingdom of the world is tempting and wide-spread, but the Kingdom of God is beautiful and led by a loving king. We choose to be a part of either one or the other. So what happens if we want to choose to be a part of the Kingdom of God? How do we actually do that? That's what we're going to focus on today.

Father, May I?

But before we get too far ahead of ourselves, let's play a game. This game requires a bit of movement, so I'm going to need you all to get up and walk to the back of the room. We're going to play "Father, May I?". Don't worry if you don't know the rules! They're easy and I'll explain them really quickly. I'll be the "father" and you all will be the "children". I'm going to stand up here on the stage facing away from you, while you all line up in a line across the back of the room. I'll point to one of you to give a movement suggestion. For example, you might ask, "Father, may I take five steps forward?" and I'll reply either "Yes, you may take five steps forward" or "No, you may not do that, but you may crawl like a crab for 5 seconds instead". At that point, all of you have to do what I say. The point of the game is to get to me. Even if I tell you to move away from me or do something you don't want to do, you have to do it. The first one of you to reach me wins! Which means that if I tell you to take five steps forward, you want to try and take bigger steps than everyone else in the room. Make sense? Ready, set, go!

Awesome job!

Entering the Kingdom

So we know that the kingdom of God exists. And I don't know about you, but the Kingdom of God sounds way more attractive to me than the kingdom of this world. So how do we enter it?

Religion

I think the most common way that people think to enter God's kingdom is religion. If you follow all the rules there are in the Bible and do the right things, then you can enter the Kingdom of God. Right? That seems logical.

But remember, the Kingdom of God doesn't operate in ways that we might think are "logical". The crazy thing is, we actually DON'T want religion and it's not going to help us get anywhere in the kingdom. Let's pause and define religion so we're all on the same page...

SLIDE: Religion is any kind of man-made system that we're using to try and work our way into God's favor.

Religion is any kind of man made system that we're using to try and work our way into God's favor. This looks a lot like "earning" our way to God loving us through trying to follow all the rules and doing good things. At the root of the matter, religion means we're saying, "God, I'll be good and then you'll owe your approval in return". The truth is, we can't accomplish things or be good so that God loves us more and approves of us. But that's a hard lesson to learn.

Personal Story

Tell a story of when you were striving for others' and God's approval. Maybe you were struggling with trying to be successful all the time or trying to be the best or the funniest. How did this affect your relationships with close friends and family? How did this affect your relationship with God? How did you come out of striving and begin to receive from the people around you and God?

Bottom Line: Receive

The bottom line is: God doesn't care about us trying to win him over. He actually doesn't like it. That's not the way to enter His kingdom. He actually doesn't NEED us to do anything for the kingdom to happen. He is the one to make it happen. All we have to do is receive his love and look for what he's doing. And his love isn't just any kind of love. It's the unending love of a Father.

Jesus was God's son. A son who was always about his Father's business and didn't need to be forgiven. Jesus chose to die and conquer death so that we would be free to receive God's love and be welcomed into the family. He paid our debt so that we don't have to be slaves and work for God's approval.

From Approval Not For Approval

Here's the hardest and simplest part... all we have to do is receive it. If we want to enter God's kingdom, we have to recognize that God sees me as a beloved son or daughter because of what Jesus did. It seems like it might be simple to just receive, but if you're anything like me, it's actually pretty hard to stop striving. I have to start working from approval instead of for approval.

SLIDE: Luke 12:32

In Luke 12:32, Jesus tells his followers,

Don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.

It's the Father's good will to see us enter the kingdom by receiving the love of the king. We're going to watch a movie clip that I think sort of describes how I feel when I'm trying to understand how God can be both a Father and a King.

VIDEO: The King's Speech (King's daughters see him for the first time after being crowned. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQLIHs849iU>)

Father And King

SLIDE: picture of father and king

You can tell that the King's daughters feel a little awkward and uncomfortable. Later on in the movie, the girls realize that he is just as much their dad after becoming the king than he was before becoming. They are able to relate to him both as father and as king! In our minds, we don't think of a king and a dad as the same type of person. Sometimes it seems like those are characteristics can't fit together. But the truth is, they can. And do. There's only one person in the world that gets to ask the King for a glass of water at 3 am... it's his kid! And if we choose to receive God's love and forgiveness, we're welcomed into the royal family.

As we break up into small groups, ask ourselves, "How good am I at receiving from the people around me?" and "How good am I at receiving from God?"

Pray.

Dismiss to small groups.

Prep and AV Needs

Small Group:

- Notecards (enough for each student to have one)
- Pens, markers
- LIVE Bible
- Receive CD

Large Group:

- LIVE Bible

AV Needs:

1. Slide: Middle School Graphic
1. Slide: pictures of nature, peace, people getting along (from last week) on one half of slide pictures and sadness, people mad at each other, money (from last week) on other half of slide. (on public drive)
2. Slide: Religion: Any kind of man-made system that we're using to try and work our way into God's favor.
3. Verse: *Don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.* Luke 12:32
4. Video: Clip of girls seeing their father as king for the first time (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQLIHs849iU>)
5. Slide: Middle School Graphic
6. Slide: Pictures of a father and a king (on public drive)
7. Slide: Middle School Graphic