

Lesson 3: Priorities

Opening Discussion

We've all known needy people—those who constantly demand to be first in our lives. When someone makes endless demands, it can end the relationship.

Yet that's exactly what Jesus expects of us. He expects to be first—but not because He's needy. He presses close because we're needy, because we can't have a full, satisfying life apart from Him.

Jesus expects to be your first priority not for His sake, but for yours.

Discussion: What does it mean to make Jesus your first priority? What does that look like practically in daily life?

Being vs. Doing

Most conversations about priorities focus on productivity and getting stuff done. But as a follower of Jesus, **who you are is infinitely more important than what you do.**

Read: Colossians 1:13 "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves."

Discussion:

- What does it mean to be a citizen of God's Kingdom?
 - Why is your identity more important than your activities?
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The Kingdom of God... and You

God's grace has ushered you into an invisible, eternal Kingdom. As a Jesus-follower, one of those places God rules is your heart.

But it's challenging to stay mindful of citizenship in a Kingdom you can't see. Your heart gets pulled many directions—toward God, but also toward selfishness, pride, sensuality, and materialism.

Living with a foot in multiple kingdoms isn't sustainable. It drains the joy out of following Jesus and dulls your ability to hear Him.

Your first priority as a disciple is to see yourself for who you are: a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

What's a Stronghold?

A stronghold is an area of your life that, despite prayer and effort, remains dark territory held by Satan—thoughts, habits, addictions, or emotions that sabotage your friendship with Jesus and growth as a disciple.

Discussion:

- What challenges make it difficult to live as a citizen of God's Kingdom?
 - Do you sense any strongholds in your life? (If so, share with your discipler)
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Fundamental Truths About the Kingdom

Truth 1: The Kingdom Has a King—Jesus

Read: Psalm 111:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Jesus isn't just your Savior—He's your King. "Fear" here means respect, awe, and reverence. As a disciple you're following a holy King worthy of your complete obedience and service.

Discussion: How does viewing Jesus as King (not just Savior) change the way you relate to Him?

Truth 2: The King Is Not You

The Kingdom of God is not a democracy. You don't get a vote and you weren't brought in to fix what's broken. Jesus is the eternal King and He's got it all covered. Though as you follow Jesus, you'll discover one broken thing He's fixing is... you.

Discussion: Where in your life do you struggle to let Jesus be King? Where do you try to maintain control?

Truth 3: The Kingdom Is About Loving Transformation

In God's Kingdom, King Jesus left heaven to become human and deal with the dirt, disease, and death that plague us. He did it because of love—and it's a love that invites your response daily.

In time you'll lose your taste for sin not because you fear punishment, but because your love for Jesus motivates you to value your friendship with Him more than temporary pleasures from sin.

Discussion: Can you think of a time when love for Jesus helped you resist temptation? How did that feel different from resisting out of fear or guilt?

Seek First the Kingdom

Read: Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Being a citizen is one thing; actively striving to be a faithful citizen is another. When you're leaning into loving and serving your King, it unlocks other blessings God is eager to give you.

Following Jesus means keeping your eye on Him. Anything that pulls your focus away from Him is a distraction, possibly an entanglement.

Confront Entanglements

Becoming entangled is like wandering into barb wire that rips and tears at you. It's painful, and if you're not careful you'll be so tangled up that you can't escape.

Entanglements tend to fall into three categories:

Cravings of sinful man: Over-size hungers including lust, impurity, sexual sin, gluttony, self-indulgence. Easy to fall into; difficult to escape.

Lust of the eyes: An "I see it and I want it" entanglement. Focus captured by material and physical possessions.

Boasting: Unhealthy pride. A desire for fame, power, or position that motivates lying, cutting corners, and doing whatever it takes to come out on top.

Read: 1 John 2:16 "For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world."

Discussion:

- Which of these three entanglements feels most familiar to you?
 - Can you share a time (past or present) when you've struggled with one of these?
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Order Your Life According to Kingdom Priorities

You're living in God's Kingdom now; it's time to fully move in and make it your home. No more waffling between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. Decide you're all-in.

Practical Steps:

- Willingly submit to King Jesus, accepting His authority in your life
- Avoid entanglements; if you find yourself caught in one, say so and get help
- Keep your eyes firmly on Jesus

Discussion: What does it mean practically to submit to Jesus as King? What would change in your daily routine?

Embrace Kingdom Priorities

Read: Mark 12:30-31 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Discussion: What does it look like to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Give specific examples.

Read: Matthew 28:18-19 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

One way to love God and others is to invite them into the Kingdom and help them grow there. Do for them what your discipler is doing for you.

The top Kingdom priorities: Be loving toward God and others, and nurture the faith of others.

But keep those in order: Who you are is more important than what you do. God is after your heart and, once it's His, He'll equip you to do far more than you ever thought possible.

Discussion: Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus? Who could you begin praying for and reaching out to?

Develop a Kingdom Perspective

Once you've been living in God's Kingdom awhile, you'll naturally begin asking: "Am I seeking the Kingdom of God?" whenever you face a significant decision.

The benefits of living in the Kingdom are so powerful you won't want to risk compromising your place there.

You'll begin seeing everything differently—including your problems, which will somehow begin to shrink. Not that they'll go away, but when you recognize how vast, powerful, and eternal God's Kingdom is, your problems shrink because you understand how small they are in proportion to the Kingdom.

Big Problem vs. Big Kingdom

"Big Problem" perspective: Focusing on your problem, not the Kingdom. The problem looms so large it consumes your thoughts. You can't see past it.

"Big Kingdom" perspective: Same problem, but it isn't your focus. You see the problem for what it is: Something God will help you deal with.

"Big Problem" Jesus-followers tend to be lonely because they're focusing only on their problems. "Big Kingdom" Jesus-followers look past themselves and experience the joy of giving and receiving support from other believers.

Discussion:

- Think of a current problem you're facing. Are you viewing it from a "Big Problem" or "Big Kingdom" perspective?
 - What would change if you shifted to a "Big Kingdom" perspective?
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Avoid Burnout and Embrace Maturity

What matters most in the Kingdom is who you are rather than what you do. One outcome of getting that right is that your life will begin reflecting God's values and heart for others. You'll thrive in God's Kingdom rather than wither away.

Four States of Spiritual Life

If you've been following Jesus awhile, you can get a good idea of how well you're balancing being and doing by considering these four states:

Lukewarm: You're not loving toward God and others, and you're not doing good things like inviting others into the Kingdom. This is spiritual apathy—going through the motions without heart engagement or action.

Stagnating: You're loving toward God and others, but you're not doing anything with that love. You have good intentions and warm feelings, but no fruit. Your faith isn't moving outward to bless others.

Burned Out: You're busy doing good things like serving and inviting others to the Kingdom, but your heart isn't in it. You're running on empty, serving from obligation rather than love. This leads to exhaustion and resentment.

Mature: You're both loving toward God and others AND doing good things like inviting others into the Kingdom. Your actions flow from a heart connected to Jesus. You're thriving, not just surviving.

Discussion:

- Which of these four states best describes where you are right now?
 - What would it take to move toward (or remain in) the "Mature" state?
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Four Disciplines of the Christian Faith

These four practices have helped Jesus-followers since Day 1. They're daily reminders to seek first the Kingdom of God. They're windows that swing open your soul, giving God's grace the chance to blow through your life. And they'll help you overcome temptation.

Discipline 1: Prayer

Read: 1 Peter 3:12 "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Discussion: How would your life change if you prayed with specificity and expectation that God would answer?

Discipline 2: Bible Study

Read: James 1:21 "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."

Discussion: Do you currently view Bible reading as homework or as encountering God's love for you? How can you shift toward the latter?

Discipline 3: Sharing Your Faith

Read: Philemon 6 "I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ."

Discussion: What keeps you from sharing your faith story with others? What would make it easier?

Discipline 4: Fellowship

Read: Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Discussion: Are you regularly connecting with other believers? If not, what's one step you could take this week to pursue fellowship?

Closing

Memory Verse to Consider

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33, NASB)

This Week's Action

Choose one action step based on today's discussion:

- Identify which entanglement you struggle with most and share it with an accountability partner
- Practice viewing a current problem from a "Big Kingdom" perspective
- Begin one of the four disciplines more intentionally (prayer, Bible study, sharing your faith, or fellowship)

Final Prayer

How can I pray for you?

Pray for each other about specific areas where you want to grow—making Jesus your first priority, walking in freedom from entanglements, or developing one of the four spiritual disciplines.