



## The Seven: Kingdom

November 5 | Weekly Devotionals

### DAY 1

If the message of the Gospel is *Jesus is Lord*, and we are Christ's ambassadors bringing that message to the places we live, the next logical question is, "How, then, shall we live?" Let's start to answer with our next priority: Kingdom.

When God created the world, he created it in a state of shalom. "Shalom" is a word that simply means "peace." This peace is not just an absence of fighting or strife, but it's the peace that comes from God's goodness in our lives. Shalom exists when God's peace is fully realized in the earth. Shalom was God's design for creation.

Where'd it go wrong? Sin. When we, God's creation, decided to rebel against him and to go our own way, we lost shalom. Heaven and earth were split from one another. And it wasn't just any split; it was a deep, wide, insurmountable chasm. We used the free will God gave us to deny him and set ourselves up as royalty. We can see the result of that brokenness everywhere we look. The world is hurting, yearning for the shalom that it was designed for.

But the Gospel reminds us there's good news. Really good news. His name is Jesus. Not only did he come to rescue us from our sins to make us right with God, but he came to bring shalom. That's why he gave sight to the blind, gave strength to the legs of the paralyzed, he opened deaf ears, and so much more. He was heaven embodied. Shalom was being restored in Christ Jesus. As Mark tells us...

*“Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’”* **Mark 1:14-15**

Jesus brought the kingdom of God near: the kingdom that had been fractured since the creation of the world. Everywhere he went, he did and said things that brought God’s shalom to people who were hurting. He didn’t just pray that God’s kingdom would come, he actively brought the kingdom with him.

### **Questions for reflection:**

1. What is your understanding of shalom? How have you seen the absence of God’s shalom in your own life? Where have you seen signs of its presence?
2. Imagine what it might have been like to grow up in first-century Israel, learning about God’s holiness and the divide between us and God’s kingdom. What if you’d heard Jesus say, “The kingdom of God is at hand”? How revolutionary must have that sounded? How revolutionary is it in your own life today?
3. Take time to review some of Jesus’ miracles (try starting with **John 2:1-11; Luke 5:1-11; Mark 1:40-45; Matthew 8:5-13; Matthew 8:23-27**). Look for the restoration of God’s shalom in each one. What do you notice about each of these, where shalom was missing, and how Jesus brings shalom? How does any of this apply to your own life?

## DAY 2

While Jesus was praying for and actively bringing the Kingdom, he also taught about it. He compared it to a lot of different things: a hidden treasure (**Matthew 13:44**), a mustard seed (**Matthew 13:31-32**), a landowner (**Matthew 20:1-16**), a fishing net (**Matthew 13:47-50**), a merchant (**Matthew 13:45-46**), just to name a few.

A few more aspects of kingdom to highlight:

- It was prepared for us from the beginning of time. (**Matthew 25:34**)
- It is worth anything we would give up for it. (**Mark 9:47**)
- It is unattainable without sincere faith. (**Mark 10:15, Mark 10:23**)
- When we seek it first, we will be supplied with what we need. (**Luke 12:31**)
- We have been sent by Jesus to proclaim it. (**Luke 9:2, 9:60, 10:9**)

What is “kingdom” and why did Jesus put such an emphasis on it?

Biblically speaking, kingdom refers to a reign, not a realm. The “Kingdom of God” or the “Kingdom of Heaven” isn’t some alternate dimension. It’s for right here on earth.

If you look at the Lord’s prayer and how Jesus teaches his disciples to pray (**Matthew 6:10**), you’ll see that Jesus connects “your kingdom come” with “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” because one relates directly to the other. To put it simply: **Where the will of God is done, that is where his kingdom has come.**

God rules heaven, absolutely and without rival. When Jesus prays for the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven, he is praying that God’s will and his rule would be established on earth in the same way it is in heaven – not that Christians would occupy more land, resources, or money as in an earthly kingdom. Jesus is establishing an upside-down kingdom. It is not made up of material wealth or territory; it is found anywhere the will of God reigns in the hearts of his people (which we’ll talk more about tomorrow).

### Questions for reflection:

1. Take some time to read a few of the aforementioned Scripture passages in context with their stories. Notice how Jesus is responding in each one. Apply those responses to your own life. See how you might be inspired by Jesus' view of the kingdom. What analogy or metaphor that Jesus used to describe God's kingdom stood out to you? Why did it resonate? What did it teach you?
2. What does it mean that Jesus established an upside-down kingdom? How does that impact your understanding of our Kingdom priority?

## DAY 3

Yesterday we began talking about how God's kingdom is where God's will is manifested. Today, let's think about *where* God's kingdom comes.

When we apply that to God and his kingdom, we're tempted to begin by thinking really big, right? Obviously, God is large and in charge, right? We know that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere all at once. But because of this knowledge, we can be tempted to forget about the places where God does not yet rule.

Of course, he reigns over the entire universe, but there's also a sense in which (until Christ returns) Satan rules in this world (see **2 Corinthians 4:4**).

We can get into a rut thinking about how big God's kingdom is and how his rule spans the entire cosmos that we actually miss out on how God's kingdom works itself into our own lives. And how God is looking to take territory away from the devil. For those not under God's rule, Jesus is looking to take ground in their lives for the first time. For those who already claim Christ to be their king, Christ is always looking to take new ground in our hearts and lives. That's why Paul exhorts the Ephesians, "Do not give the devil a foothold" (**Ephesians 4:27**).

God may rule over the universe, but he also deserves to rule over your little corner of the world too.

This can be scary, yes. But remember what we touched on last week? Jesus is the kind of king we can trust. He is good. He is compassionate. He is trustworthy. He is just. There are no skeletons in God's closet.

It's crucial to note that God's kingdom is small enough to be able to start within each and every one of us. If God's kingdom is the place where he reigns, that means your heart can be one of the starting points of where his kingdom intersects with yours.

Jonathan Edwards, an 18th century theologian, said, "*The seeking of the kingdom of God is the chief business of the Christian life.*" If the kingdom of God is where the will of God is done, then it should start with us. Is the will of God done in our hearts? Can we look at our hearts and say, "God's kingdom has come, and his will is being done in my heart"?

**Read Ephesians 4:1-32. Are there areas in your heart where Jesus does not rule? Jot down some of your thoughts in the provided space.**

You might think of the kingdom of God and how it grows as a bullseye, with yourself in the middle. As God's kingdom comes to reign in you (the bullseye), it then has the ability to come into your family (the next ring around the bullseye). Then, it could have the opportunity to be in your extended family (the next ring out). Then, in your neighbors, co-workers, and social groups (the next ring out). And so on and so on. You get the picture.

If you wanted to identify where the kingdom exists, you would need to start with yourself. Then it grows in concentric circles out from you. Those rings are going to be different for each of us based on the influence we have and the people we're in contact with.

**Take some time to identify those kingdom circles. Draw a bullseye below and label those rings of influence.** Your finished 'kingdom map' could have as little as three rings and as many as ten rings. Think about all the places in your life where you interact and have influence with others: your household, neighborhood, work environment, school, life group, organizations, etc. There isn't a wrong answer, as long as identifying them can help you add intention to doing your part to making God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. As you draw out our 'kingdom map,' ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify one way you can bring God's kingdom to bear in that specific circle - in yourself, in your family, in your neighborhood, etc. *Be prepared to share this map with your life group.*

## DAY 4

*“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two-by-two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’” (Luke 10:1-2).*

- **Imagine** your life group as a kingdom community, serving alongside one another to bring shalom to the world around you, focused on seeing God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- **Imagine** how that might change not only the people you would serve, but also each member of your group.
- **Imagine** God’s kingdom coming into your own heart and flooding out of it with power from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, through his example, shows us how to bring about his kingdom. And, really, it comes as we live in the way of love. The kingdom of God comes through agape. It comes through the giving up of our own wants, ideals, desires, preferences, hopes, and goals so that others can flourish instead of ourselves.

This isn’t some weird form of asceticism; this is following after the footsteps of Jesus.

Take some time to view some famous artists’ rendition of Jesus’ crucifixion. The images are linked for you here.



*Christ Crucified, Diego Velazquez*



*The Crucifixion, Matthias Grunewald*



*Christ on the Cross, Peter Paul Rubens*

Christians believe that when we look at Jesus, and Jesus on the cross, we are seeing the character of God on display (see **Hebrews 1:1-4**). And Christ on the cross, like these many paintings show us, does not operate out of coercion or force. Christians follow Jesus’ example.

Jesus opted to change the world through co-suffering love. And we do the same.

We choose to empty ourselves. We choose to enter into the mire of burdened people. And we choose to suffer with those around us.

You see, it's easy to equate kingdom with "work" — doing things for God, being active and busy in his service. The problem is that when "work" and "progress" become the goals, then that means that the ends are justified by whatever it takes to get there. It doesn't matter if we bring God's kingdom in a loving way or not. What matters is that the work gets done.

Not true. That doesn't fully encapsulate Jesus' heart for God's kingdom. Jesus, knowing our hearts and minds, wanted to see God's kingdom come to every area within us and in the world, but he wanted it to come about in the right way: through love.

We are workers being sent into the fields of harvest. It's about following in his footsteps, taking on his mindset, and living out Paul's vision for the Christian life when he says, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives within me" (**Galatians 2:20**).

As noted before, **Habakkuk 3** says, "*LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known.*"

This is our prayer at The Creek when it comes to our priority of Kingdom. We want to see God's fame and deeds repeated in our day. It starts with God, and it flows through each of us as we keep our eyes out for where he's working and we choose to bring whatever we have to make it happen. We bring about his kingdom through love.

And what's glorious about this is that you're not a lone wolf in this endeavor. You have a pack. We're not asked to do this alone. Just like Jesus sent followers out in pairs and in groups, he's doing the same thing with your group.

Let's do what we can to bring shalom to the world around us and to see God's fame and deeds repeated in our day.

### Questions for reflection:

1. If you were writing the same prayer that Habakkuk wrote thousands of years ago, how would you write it? In what ways would you want the fame and deeds of God to be known and repeated in our city and in our day?
2. Spend some time prayerfully reading **John 13:1-17**. Ask God to show you in these verses how Jesus' example informs how you need to think about bringing



about his kingdom. Where is God challenging you? What is something new he's teaching you? Where in your life recently have you not exemplified the way of Jesus as described here in **John 13**?

3. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his field, including yourself and your group (aren't you glad God called you to the harvest fields but he didn't call you to do it alone? He's given you a group of people to serve alongside!). Spend some time in gratitude, thanking him for providing you with people and resources that can be used to bring his kingdom to earth. Look around at the places where he's at work and see with your group how you might join him in that work. Then make a plan to go do that.

## DAY 5

We've seen how God's upside-down kingdom works, we've seen that Jesus brought that kingdom wherever he went by serving others, we've mapped out the kingdom for ourselves, and we've seen how we ought to bring about God's kingdom through love.

Now that we know these things, it's time to invite the Holy Spirit to start to conform our desires to seeing God's kingdom come, to seeing his will be done wherever, whenever, and however he desires. But until it is our chief desire, we will probably not choose to spend our time and influence seeing it come true.

Today, let's turn to Jesus' own words to reflect on His prayer. If we can let them sink in, they will properly drive our actions and thoughts.

Here are a handful of steps to help you do this:

1. Read through the text slowly. Look it up online and try a few different translations, especially if you're already familiar with it.
2. Read it again and use your imagination to capture the heart of Jesus when he asked for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done.
3. Read it again and think about those metaphors Jesus used to describe God's kingdom. What do you picture in your mind? What does God's kingdom—that starts in your own heart—look like?
4. Journal your observations, your thoughts, any invitations that God might be making.
5. Finally, write out your own paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer on the next page. When finished, jot down 2-3 ways you plan on embodying that prayer this week.

*“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.”*

- Matthew 6:9-13