

MATURING THE CHURCH



A Self Paced Devotional study in 2 Parts

Part 1: Living Kingdom

Part 2: The Restoration of the Five –Fold Ministry to the church.

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Part 1: LIVING KINGDOM

TOPICS

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Week 1: A New Vision - God's Appointed Time Has Come!

Week 2: A New Way of Life - Living Kingdom

Week 3: A New Identity – the Family of God

Week 4: A New Wineskin – Being Church

This study booklet has been designed as a self paced devotional guide. Deliberately, it will raise as many questions as it may answer. It's purpose is to stimulate thinking, but more than that, to stimulated dialogue with the Father with the prayer that He will grant you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation so that you might know Him better.

Some of these studies may take more than a day or even three to work through. There is no rush ...work at your own pace. Pause – reflect - allow the Holy Spirit space to work with you in shaping thought and responses.

ENJOY!

Biblical Quotations were accessed online through the Bible Gateway
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Background notes: WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The Kingdom of God was the central focus of the preaching ministry of Jesus. He begins His ministry with a dramatic prophetic announcement: *The time has come – the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News!* (Mark 1:15).

He is saying this is God's special appointed time– the time for the fulfillment of His promises in the scriptures (Old Testament). Those who heard Him did not need convincing that there was such a Kingdom – the concept was deeply rooted in Old Testament and Rabbinic thought.

Old Testament Background.

In the O.T. the Kingship of God is portrayed in the following ways:

1) His Kingship now.

- His sovereignty over creation (*Ps 103:19; Ps 33:8*)
This began with the calling of creation into being – under His word of command – His rule. (Adam's eating of the fruit is an act of disobedience and rebellion).
- He is Israel's King. (*1 Samuel 12:12; Isaiah 43:15; Jeremiah 8:19*)
- He is King over the nations (*Jeremiah 10:7; Mal 1:14; 1 Chron 29:11f*)

God expresses this sovereignty through the events of history. eg.

- Assyria – the rod of His anger. (*Isaiah 10:5–12*).
- Cyrus – the Persian – His anointed one. (*Isa 45:1-7*) – note too vs 7

2) The Coming Kingdom – Messianic Hope.

However there is a certain contradiction in all this Israel was disobedient to God's rule – the other nations worshipped other gods and failed to recognize His authority. The understanding developed (the revelation came) that while God was indeed King – this Kingship was hidden, but a time would come when it would no longer be so – all would bow the knee – the wicked would be dealt with – rebellion would be no more. (*Isa 45:22-25*). (Note also *Isa 24:23* and *Zechariah 14:9*).

This hope developed out of the promises made to David (*2 Sam 7:8-16*). A King would come – one like David – to establish righteousness and peace and through the hand of God, this Kingdom would never end. (*Isaiah 9:6-7, 11:1-16*)

This Kingdom would not be one of many in the world, rather, God as judge, would break into human history “to make an end to sin” and “to bring in everlasting righteousness” (*Daniel 2:44, 9:24*). This end time hope flows from faith in God's righteous judgment in history and his faithfulness in covenant with His people. This end time aspect is the background to Jesus' prayer: “*thy Kingdom come*”

It represents the establishment of the anticipated Kingdom as the climax of all history, along the lines of the prophetic pictures of the day of the Lord found in Joel, Amos and Zephaniah etc. This would be a day of fire and judgment. A day of vengeance of our God. (*Isa 61:2*) **See here Ephesians 1:9-10**

Comment: re this Background.

At times of suffering and struggle, the thought of a time when God would make manifest His Kingship and the plans of the unrighteous would be smashed ignited the popular imagination (Ps 2). **Jesus lived in such a time, with Palestine under Roman occupation.**

3) Rabbinic Background in the time of Jesus.

The Rabbis used the expression "Kingdom of Heaven":

- To avoid using the divine name (Matt 4:17)
- The Kingdom of Heaven referred to God's rule/authority more than its territory, subjects or operations.
- At present God's rule over all is hidden but a day is coming when it shall be made manifest.
- The righteous – those obedient to the Torah (the law) will sit at the messianic banquet with the King. The wicked, (gentiles, tax collectors and prostitutes) will be destroyed.

4) Jesus' Vision of the Kingdom.

Jesus' dynamic teaching on the Kingdom takes us beyond both the Old Testament concept and that of the Judaism of His day. His word is radical, revolutionary, subversive. What is Jesus on about? What is this Kingdom? Why is it Good News?

For Jesus – the Kingdom is the realm where God is King – where His Kingship (authority, rule) is being manifested.

- It is intimately tied to Him. – ie. Jesus Himself – (*eg Matt 5:21-22*)
- The Kingdom is present in Him. ... His words and actions demonstrate the reality of the presence of this Kingdom.

**Week 1: A New Vision: The Time Has Come
Kingdom Advance Is Unstoppable!**

MONDAY: THE TIME HAS COME!

Mark 1: 15 *The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!*

This one liner is at the heart of Jesus' ministry ...His parables, His teaching on discipleship and His healing ministry. It is as it were a summary statement of His life message.

So what exactly is this Kingdom? It is the realm where God's authority is made manifest and where His rule is set.

God's rule established (Genesis 1:1-2)

God's Kingdom rule is first seen in the Creation account in Genesis 1:1-3

The earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

No life ...no structure (chaos) Darkness reigns! And then

Let there be Light!

By divine command, light floods in, structure is established ...darkness is limited ...life comes forth. God imposes His order and brings life through His creative activity ...setting His rule over the creation

Highlighting the way this kingdom is to be stewarded, the man and the woman made in His image are to represent Him and rule for Him over the earth. (Genesis 1:26-28)
Through their sin ...chaos & futility again rule.

Through the promise of a coming king, God makes known, through the Hebrew prophets, His plan to bring order and Life into the chaos.

Reflection:

Read Isaiah 9:6-7

What stands out for you as you read this passage today.

Consider the last sentence here. What is this zeal of the Lord that will accomplish this?

Take time today to allow God to speak to you through these scriptures.

TUESDAY: A VISION OF THE LAST DAYS

Read Isaiah 2: 1-5

Reflect on what the vision conveys

- for the mountain of the Lord's temple to be chief among the mountains
- for it be raised above the hills
- for all the nations to stream to it.

Can you see the peoples of the earth coming to learn of his ways.

- Through Jesus the law has gone out from Zion
- What does the picture of beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks convey.

How could there be a day where nations will no longer train for war?

This is a prophetic picture of the Kingdom. Can you see it in your spirit?!

Note Isaiah 11: 10 and also Habakkuk 2:14

**Can you sense the excitement and the passions stirred
when Jesus announces:**

The Time has Come!



WEDNESDAY: THE BAPTISM OF JESUS – Consider the Signs**Read Mark 1: 9-13 and consider**

What is described here is a profound personal experience of Jesus ...undoubtedly shared with his closest disciples.

While the signs in this vision would have brought great reassurance to Jesus, as He stepped forward to commit himself to His ministry calling; they also point towards what God was initiating through Him.

What 3 signs accompanied Jesus' Baptism?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now consider what these signs mean ... to what do they point?

- **Reflect on the significance of the heavens being torn open ...
Consider Isaiah 64: 1-4**
- **On the Holy Spirit descending as a dove ...
Consider too Genesis 1: 1-2**
- **On the voice from heaven that affirms Jesus as Beloved Son ...**

These point to an ongoing commitment from the Father ...

- In intervening to establish His Kingdom
- It is the age of the Spirit promised in scriptures such as Ezekiel 36: 25-27 & Joel 2: 28-32
- The Son has come to bring many into Son-ship
Romans 8: 15-17; Galatians 4:4-7; Hebrews 2:10-11

THURSDAY: THE CALL TO FOLLOW – HOW WILL YOU RESPOND.

Read Mark 1:15-20 and then consider....

When Jesus comes announcing the Kingdom ... His proclamation taps into one of the deepest yearnings of His generation. ... a yearning and praying for God's promised intervention into the chaos of human life.

This day foretold by the Hebrew prophets had at last come. This is God's special ordained time... a time when His authority will be demonstrated and His order established ... Through Jesus, God is breaking into the present to establish His purposes and to set in place His promised Future.

The challenge comes as Jesus preaches ... Will we recognize His authority ...will we bow the knee? Will we allow Him to have priority?

The disciples having been confronted with this challenge in the person of Jesus...drop their nets and follow. He has first place from this point on wherever that may take them ... whatever the cost!

Come Follow Me!

Reflection:

Are there any nets that you are holding onto that hinder you from following Jesus fully? What are they?

How can they be dropped? What's needed to overcome the hindrances?

Dialogue this through with God.



FRIDAY: THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

When looking at Jesus' creative stories drawn from 1st century Jewish Life, we need to consider how we are to hear the parable. Jesus says over and over at the conclusion of his stories ...*He who has ears to hear, let Him hear?* What do you think He might mean by that?

Like any Hebrew narrative material of the day the listener is meant to step inside the story and interact within the scenario. How we hear will depend on where we place ourselves in the story. These stories are brilliant at confronting the listener's values, worldview and attitudes.

Read Matthew 13: 1- 9 The Parable of the Sower and the interpretation of the parable in Matt 13:18-23

The seed has incredible power to produce a crop within it ...

Consider the descriptions of the soils here. What kind of soil best fits describes what is happening for you right now?

Parables can be read in many ways. They will speak into the one who has a searching heart. They are an invitation into relationship marked by listening.

The one who has ears to hear let them hear!

Consider then yourself as the seed ... where have you been sown?

What kind of soil have you been sown into?

Ask the Father if there is anything He would like you to do to increase the fruitfulness of the crop.

- **With the seed in you?**
- **In terms of the soil in which you are planted?**

SATURDAY: THE KINGDOM IS HERE – AND EXPANDING.

The Kingdom is seemingly insignificant/hidden but its influence will be extensive

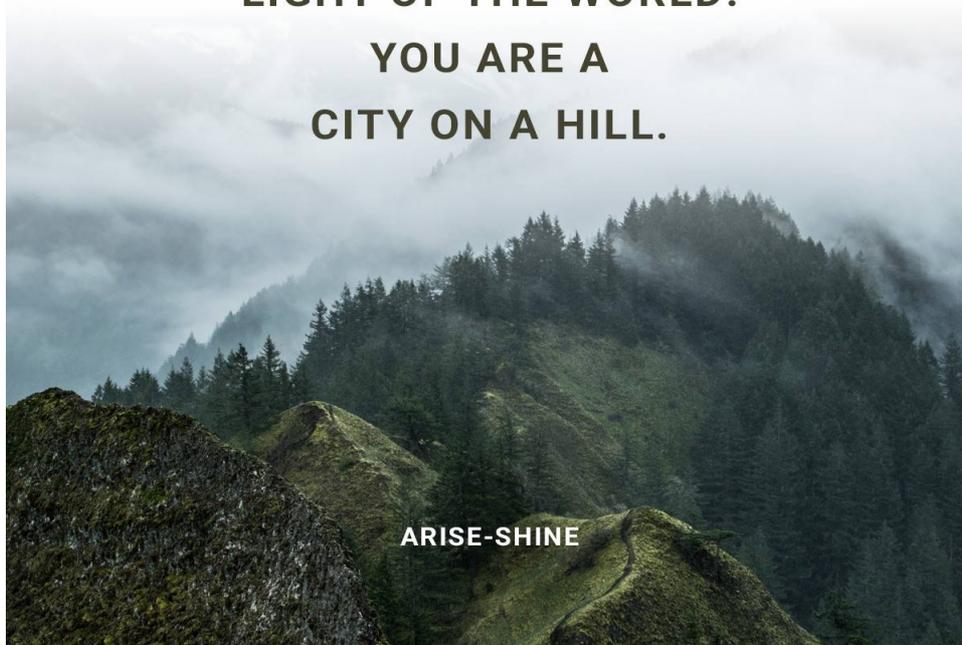
Note again the promise of Isaiah 9:6-7 ... God is absolutely determined to bring in His Kingdom.

Read the parables of the Mustard seed and the yeast and reflect on what they say about the Kingdom. Matthew 13: 31-33

Take this further: How would these parables apply to your circumstances / family / workplace?

Consider Matthew 5: 13-16

**YOU ARE THE
LIGHT OF THE WORLD.
YOU ARE A
CITY ON A HILL.**



God is intervening ..His Kingdom is being established ...the outcome is inevitable.

Father strengthen this truth in us ... increase our confidence in You.

SUNDAY: THE PRICELESS VALUE OF THE KINGDOM

Read Matthew 13: 44-45.

Reflect on the value of the Kingdom as illustrated in these parables.

Why would the man be willing to give up everything else for the treasure?

What is the attitude in His heart in doing this?

What are the things about the Kingdom that you value the most?

What are the things about the Kingdom that bring you most joy?

Notice the response when the Kingdom is found.....the unprecedented and overwhelming joy of finding something so significant ...so valuablethat one would be willing to go and give up everything else to attain the prize.

The issue is not what has been given up but rather the reason for doing so – the overpowering joy and splendour of the Kingdom that now fills the heart.

We need to remember the Kingdom really has no reality to it without the King.

What do you value most about God?

Week 2: A New Way of Life - Living Kingdom.

MONDAY: THE KINGDOM MANIFESTO

In His Teaching Jesus is pushing for a change of mindset / a change in the way of looking and thinking about life That is at the heart of Mark 1:15

Repent and Believe the Good News.

Repentance is not just about past sins but a total change of perspective / of mindset. The Greek word used here means a change of mind. Romans 12:1 speaks of *renewing of our minds*.

Jesus is calling His hearers into a Way of Life, lived out under the rule of the King, our Heavenly Father. The King and His Kingdom are to be our primary reference point, - no longer ourselves, nor the contemporary culture in which we live. (Matthew 6:31-33)

Jesus is a subversive – confronting the status quo - a change of mind (repentance)

This includes

- **attitudes**
- **values**
- **worldview**

The teaching about the Kingdom in Jesus' ministry is not restricted to the parables – it is behind all He says and does. His life, His signs and healing ministry, His way of dealing with people, all, is an expression of that Kingdom. The vision and values of the Kingdom come through in the ethical teaching of Jesus, like the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew Chapters 5-7)

Reflect on the vision found in the Beatitudes Matthew 5:1-12

- Comfort for those who are mourning
- The gentle and humble will inherit the earth.
- Those hungry and thirsty for righteousness will be filled.
- The merciful receive mercy
- The pure in heart will see God.
- **Consider how that might be expressed in daily life.**
- Peacemakers will be called the sons of God. **Why the peacemakers particularly?**
- Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.
- **Who are the poor in Spirit?**

TUESDAY: KINGDOM VALUES:

Consider the values outlined in the Sermon on the Mount

VALUES:

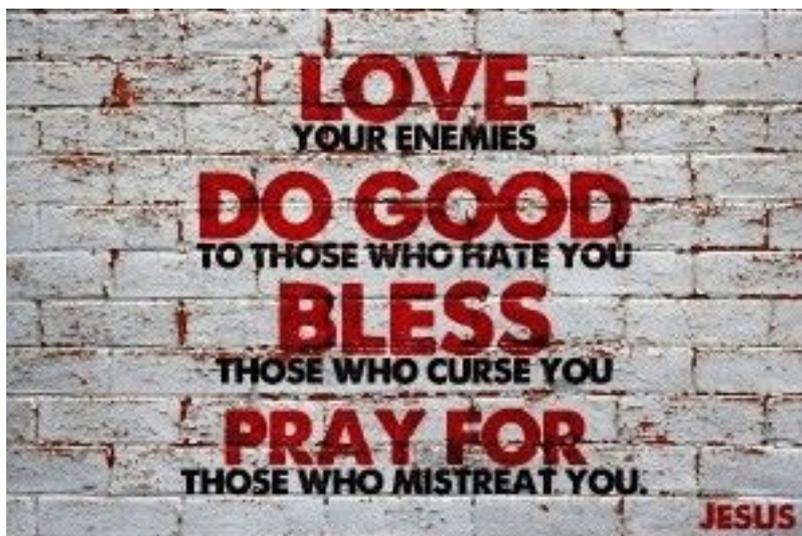
No longer:	Hatred	Matt 5:21-25
	Lust	Matt 5:27-30
	Divorce / disregard of rights	Matt 5:31-32
	Dishonesty	Matt 5:33-37
	Vengeance	Matt 5:38-42
	Judging others and being filled with resentment	Matt 7:1-5

Rather: **Generosity** **Forgiveness** **Love** **Trust**

Note Matthew 5: 43-48

Our call is love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us thus demonstrating we are sons of the Father.

Jesus is ushering in the age of the Holy Spirit. He means for us to live out of our new nature birthed by the Holy Spirit. These values are to be written into our hearts through the renewing of our minds. This is a work brought about through His loving grace built in relationship with Him.



WEDNESDAY: KINGDOM VALUES: FORGIVENESS

Read through Matthew 18:23-34.

What strikes you about the story?

-
-
-

This is what forgiveness is like in the Kingdom. "Mercy is *not giving* to a person what he deserves , while grace is *giving* to a person what he does not deserve."

Through God's mercy and forgiveness our heart is transformed, so that we too offer that same mercy and grace. If we do not, our acceptance & experience of God's mercy is still only superficial and we will not really experience or live in His forgiveness. Guilt and condemnation will still plague us and we run the risk of being shut out from that mercy.

We should go on forgiving because the reality of our forgiveness from God is demonstrated by our giving forgiveness to others.

Is there anyone you need to forgive today?

Sometimes there are longstanding resentments and issues that remain unresolved. Give space for the Holy Spirit to reveal anyone that you have something against.

Often the wounds from words or actions are quite deep. It may be that before forgiveness can be real the wound needs the healing touch of Jesus. Ask for that now.

Possibly this may be something to talk and pray through with a trusted leader.

At times we can be disappointed that God has not come through for us in the way we would have hoped. We can build resentment against God as we rehearse our disappointments. We can reach the false conclusion that God doesn't care for us ... a determination that in itself cuts us off from receiving His mercy which is flowing toward us. There is a place to forgo our case against God and to renounce the lie that He does not care.

The Lord is good and His love endures forever. Psalm 100: 5

His mercies are new every morning. Lamentations 3:22-23

THURSDAY: KINGDOM THINKING – ATTITUDES AND MINDSETS

Read through **Matt 20:1-16** - The workers in the vineyard

- What is the context?... Matt 19:27
- What strikes you as you read this parable today?
- Anything interesting In the wording?... Eg *Friend* (vs 13)

Consider:

How often do we say or at least feel *..It's not fair!*

What does this parable teach?

- Gratitude & the Motivation for service Where is our eye looking?
- Where is our focus ...on what we receive compared to others? We must be careful not to measure our worth by what we have done or what we have sacrificed.

A grateful heart will serve without thought of reward or without comparison to others. As the landowner points out, to think of rewards and to compare with others will cause us to question the wisdom and the fairness of God and to become envious of other disciples.

(p 666 Wilkins, Michael J Matthew NIV Application Commentary)

Many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first.

Those that serve with the primary motivation of gaining rewards or personal prominence will be last, while those who respond in gratitude as a matter of obedience will be first.



FRIDAY: KINGDOM THINKING – ATTITUDES TO WEALTH

Read through the parable of the rich fool - Luke 12:16-21

Put into your own words the point of the story.

Now consider how could you be rich towards God?

Read through the parable of the shrewd manager

Luke 16:1-15

Jesus uses illustrations / characters in His parables deliberately aimed at disrupting our tendency to judge and thereby retain the status quo.

This parable is a great example,

Read again carefully. What would you see as the key verse here?

On different days you might identify different verses.

How are you handling your worldly wealth?

Are you the owner or a steward?

SATURDAY: KINGDOM LIVING - DON'T BE HEARERS ONLY!

Read through Matthew 7:24-27

What is the rock on which the foundation is built?

How can we live it out:

- 1) **Pursue:** Matthew 7: 7-11
- 2) **Live on the front foot** The Golden rule ... Matthew 7:12
In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you....
- 3) **Repent and trust yourself to the Good News ...** The King has come, the Holy Spirit has been poured out ... New Life / New attitudes / new values are possible ... Ask and it will be given.

Read John 3: 3 -8

The Greek behind this concept of a new birth carries the concept of being born from above. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. We receive by asking and then trusting that what we ask for God will pour out upon us.

Take time to ask for God to fill you with His Spirit afresh today.



BUILD YOUR LIFE ON THE ROCK

Week 3: A New Identity – the Family of God

MONDAY: THE LOVE OF THE FATHER

Jesus addresses the issue of identity as Sons / Daughters of the Father in a couple of ways.

1) Read the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-31)

Both sons had distorted views of the Father. In your own words identify the mindsets of the sons in the story.

- The Prodigal
- The older Son

How in Jesus' story does the Father deal with their distorted thinking to initiate a different relationship?

Jesus here is telling us what God, the Father, is like.

Locate yourself in the story ... Who do you identify with in the story?

Where are you? Dialogue this through with the Father.

Consider the son coming back to the Father.

- His Shame is covered by the Cloak given to him
- His status is not a hired servant but a son (Sandals on His feet)
- He is trusted again to exercise authority on behalf of the Father (Signet ring)

Take time to allow God the Father to cover you, to place sandals on your feet and the signet ring on your finger.

2) Read again Matthew 5:43-48 and Matthew 5: 9

Sons exhibit the family DNA ... love for our enemies / peacemakers who are committed to reconciliation.

TUESDAY: IDENTITY IN CHRIST – THE WONDER OF SONSHIP

Read Galatians 4: 4-7

Paul says we are no longer slaves but sons and also heirs.

Words such as *adoption, son-ship, inheritance, joint heirs with Christ* are scattered through his letters.

Consider here Ephesians 1: 5 -6 and Romans 8: 13-17

This is an identity issue: This is about who we are in Christ.

God has predestined us to be sons ...joint heirs with Christ.

This is a place of enormous privilege ... this is our inheritance ... to reign with Him.

Ponder this ... Giving thanks to God and

THEN give God space to speak to you about it's application to yourself, using the material below:

Paul uses the concept of Roman adoption to illustrate our new relationship to God. These are key points and in some it differs from the practice of adoption in Australia.

1. All rights and debts associated with the old life and family were ended and cancelled.
2. the father in a family legally owned the son and this applied for life, thus the adopted son came under a new master ... the new father was responsible for the welfare of the freshly adopted son.
3. The son became an heir to all the wealth of this new father with immediate privilege and security.

Thus for the Christian:

1. Our old debts are cancelled (vs.10)
2. We became a son (vs. 14) and heir (vs.17)
3. We entered a relationship of intimate friendship & love with our new Father (vs.15)
4. We have confidence of this because He has given us His Spirit (vs.16)

NOTE: This is not earned or deserved, but is an expression of the great love and mercy of the Father.

Take time now to praise God for your new status with Him and talk through with him how the four points above specifically apply to you.

WEDNESDAY: THE HEART & MINDSET OF A CHILD OF GOD

(In the culture of the time, a son received greater inheritance and honour, but In Christ there is neither male nor female; both men and women are co heirs and inherit equally. Our identity is not based in our gender, but in our relationship with the Father. We are sons and daughters of the King. - **Galatians 3:26-29**)

Consider Luke 15: 25-32: The older son is living like a slave... He has not grasped the truth of inheritance ...” my son, you are always with me and everything I have is yours “

He hopes for inheritance but he does not live in it.

This raises a key issue for followers of Jesus today:

How deeply has our identity as son or daughter shaped our mindsets, attitudes and thus our approach to life and behavior? Are we living in the fullness of what the Father has for us or are we still caught up under the cultural discipleship of the world.

Romans 12:1-2 challenges us to *no longer conform to the pattern of the world but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind*. This involves a deliberate choice to address areas in our hearts and in our mindsets and attitudes that over time have been established within us. These are built and re-enforced over time from our interactions in our upbringing, experiences of joy and of loss and physical, mental and perhaps spiritual traumas. In the West, all of us to some extent have allowed or absorbed the secular humanism in our media, economics, education and politics that now shape our belief systems.

The transformation process can be painful but remember we have a Redeemer! He has come to set us free. In Him we are a new Creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Paul encourages us to set our hearts and minds on the things above (Colossians 3:1-3) He calls on us to make some choices: ***Put to death, therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature and to deliberately choose to clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility etc***

Carefully read through and meditate through Colossians 3:5-17

Give Him space to pour out His love on you! And to convict where He wants to.

We have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:14)

He is utterly committed to bring us into the fullness of our inheritance

Seek out a trusted Christian friend or leader to partner with you in prayer, until the ungodly structures are broken.

We are dealing here with sets of ungodly beliefs and/or attitudes of our flesh that have developed over a lifetime. We believe lies about ourselves that have the appearance and so it seems the backing evidence to be truth. Eg *I'm useless, I'm a failure, No one*

really cares for me ...the list is almost endless. We make inner vows: I'll show them, I'll never trust again, I'll make them recognize how gifted I am.

They have become something of a defense mechanism to shield us from pain and to enable us to operate in the world. They have become part of our personality and character. They must be displaced (put to death)

First, by making a choice to put to death our ungodly attitudes etc

And then, by drawing on the grace of God to renew the mind This requires a seeking after the Father and choosing deliberately to agree with Him regarding our sinful heart and His gift of a new creation – our new identity in Christ. **Matthew 6:33**

Consider the incredible promise in the prayer of Paul in **Ephesians 1:17-22**
Note vs 19 ... may your heart be enlightened to experience something of this incomparable power of the Spirit to renew your mind and bring out the fullness of the blessing of being an adopted child of God.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! **1 John 3:1**

THURSDAY: SONS & DAUGHTERS - It's all about the heart!

When it comes to Christians being church together, there is a big difference in how we approach our involvement as a corporate body. Do we do so as “*servants of another's vision*” looking for our needs to be met and hungering for recognition and promotion **or as *brothers and sisters together and sons and daughters in the house, our hearts submitted to each other and to the fathers and mothers within the house.***

We know the Heavenly Father is committed to empowering and releasing His sons and daughters into the fullness of their ministry in Christ. The Father's heart is for His sons and daughters and for them to excel.

In like manner, the heart of the spiritual fathers and mothers of the house is to empower and release, the sons and daughters in the house, into the fullness of their ministry in Christ.

Holy Community (Kingdom Family) is experienced when the hearts of the sons & daughters is likewise committed to encouraging and honouring the fathers and mothers of the house so that the fathers and mothers excel in their ministry.

**The approval of a father will empower the son!
The giving of the heart of the son / daughter releases inheritance**

Consider Jesus in the transfiguration ... This is my Son who I love. Listen to Him!

Note John 13: 1-17

Jesus at rest in His Father's love Knowing the Father was over all ... knowing where he had come from and where He was going (His purpose and ultimate destiny) ...got up from the meal ... poured the water into the basin

He demonstrates the kingdom dynamic of servant-hood ...He undertakes the most humble service (washing feet) ...prefiguring the humiliation of the cross the ultimate action of love.

He isn't trying to prove anything; He isn't worrying about status or reputation ...He simply serves His disciples and calls them to follow His example.

As He lays down His life in obedience to the Father - the Nations become His inheritance. **(Psalm 2: 7-8)**

Read Mark 10:35-45

Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all.

Sons and Daughters don't need to fight for recognition, or place ...they have that with the Father according to His purpose and timing. A mighty inheritance awaits us ...we are co-heirs with Christ. By the Spirit we cry *Abba Father*. **(Romans 8: 12-17)**

FRIDAY: BEING CHURCH – HEART ATTITUDES
(Humility and Submission)

Jack Frost in his teaching from Slavery to Son-ship writes: *The spirit of Son-ship is all about having a heart attitude of submission – being subject to another's mission. Jesus Himself said, 'The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.'* (John 5: 19) *Son-ship is about security, significance, identity, patience, basic trust, faithfulness, loyalty, humility and being others-oriented.*

Read 1 Peter 5:5 and Ephesians 5:21

Humility and Submission are key.

Humility is an attitude of heart that realizes that it is not all about *me*. It is about doing what I can to see others do well.

Submission is a matter of the hearta laying down of myself for another.

They are about coming under and lifting up.

Leaders are to come under and push up the people of a congregation. This is the heart of servant leadership. The people are to be cherished, fought for, believed in, honoured.

Similarly the people are to do so for their leaders. This is the heart of mutual submission in Ephesians 5:21

Ponder this with the Heavenly Father, asking how you *can get under and push up* your church family and it's leadership team, your workplace colleagues and bosses and your family members.

Che`Ahn, in his teaching on '*Apostolic Alignment, Accountability and Spiritual Authority*,' shares that breakthrough and release came when he received the revelation of the need to be under spiritual authority. He believes that 'the only one who is safe to lead is the person free to submit.'

**We can't be in true spiritual authority unless we are under authority.
 We can't lead unless we know how to follow."**

SATURDAY: BELONGING TO THE FAMILY OF GOD.

Each member belongs to all the others **Rom 12:5**

Make a list of the exhortations regarding the *one another's* below: eg

- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love cf **Rom 12: 10**
- Honour (ie Value) one another above yourselves **Rom 12: 10**
- Live in harmony with one another **Rom 12: 16**

- **Galatians 5:13**

- **Ephesians 4:2**

- **Ephesians 4:32**

- **Colossians 3:16**

- **1 Thessalonians 5:11**

- **James 5:16**

- **1 Peter 1:22**

- **1 Peter 3:8**

- **1 Peter 4:8-9**

- **1 John 3:23**

As we seek to apply these imperatives and learn to access the grace that is available from the fellowship of the Holy Spirit we begin to be **a people who are holy (different from the world)**. We begin to be that dwelling place of God in our corporate life together as Ephesians 2: 22 proclaims.

Reflection: As we are look for God's presence in our worship gatherings, the way we have regard for and love one another is a very important element.

Read & meditate on Ephesians 4: 29-5:2

Our Relationships/ attitudes /the way we speak with, about and to one another is vital in either ushering in God's favour and blessing or in grieving the Holy Spirit.

Pray into Sunday's gathering of the church that a Spirit of Honour and Love would flow through all our people and that each person who comes tomorrow will be CHANGED in the encounter with GOD.

Week 4: A new Wineskin – Being Church.

MONDAY: OLD WINESKINS CANNOT CONTAIN THE NEW WINE!

The Kingdom is Revolutionary in Nature

Currently there is a great shaking taking place in the church. ... In the western world, people have left the church in droves ... and there is much discussion in church circles on the shape of the church and how mission is to be accomplished.

There is a sense that God is up to something and that we are on the cusp of a radical shift in the way we see church; a shift as radical as the reformation under Martin Luther.

There is much talk of new wineskins for the church ... But what really is the new wineskin Jesus referred to in His challenge of the religious system of His day.

Read Luke 5:36-39 and meditate on what Jesus is getting at.

Look particularly at **verse 39**. What is Jesus saying about our attitudes here?

Consider too **Matthew 13:52** There are treasures embedded in the old.

How does a new wineskin differ from the old?

Does the picture of a patch on the old garment help our understanding?

What exactly is the new wine Jesus is talking about?

TUESDAY: WHAT IS THE OLD WINESKIN & THE NEW WINE IN THE PARABLE

Consider the context of Luke 5:36-39

- Luke 5: 27-31 Note the criticism of the Pharisees over Jesus eating with the Tax Collectors and Sinners.
- Luke 5: 33-34 Note their criticism of Jesus because His disciples are eating and drinking rather than fasting.

The Bridegroom is present ... this changes everything.

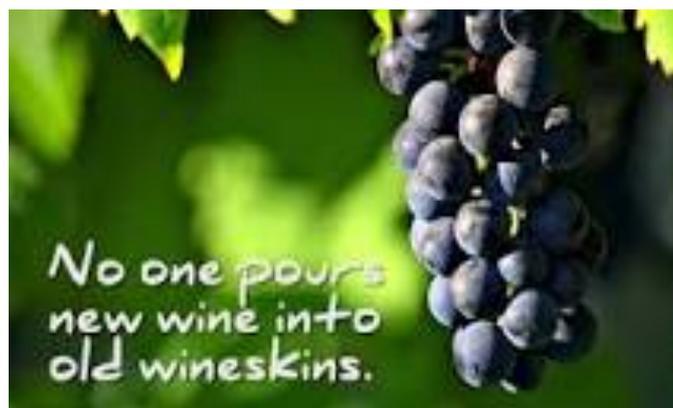
What then is the New Wine?

Let's consider what changes with the coming of Jesus.

- The Kingdom so long awaited is breaking in.
- A New Covenant is set in place in the last supper and sealed at the cross. (Luke 22:19-20)
- The Gift of the Holy Spirit poured out on all flesh. (Acts 2:14-21)

A case could be made that these 3 together represent the new wine that needs a new wineskin to contain it, lest the dynamic within be lost.

Consider this, giving thanks for each of these three in your own life.



WEDNESDAY: THE WONDER OF THE NEW WINE.

Read John 2: 1-11

Consider the Setting....

- **A Wedding** (A familiar Jewish metaphor for the Kingdom to come)
- **The wine had run out** (If we consider this phrase as picture language pointing to something wider what does the wine has run out suggest?)
- **6 stone water jars for ceremonial washing ...** (Could this represent the old way ...the old wineskin?)
- **Jesus transforms the water into wine** (He brings new wine)
- **The quantity of wine is super abundant and It's quality – supreme.**

Did you notice the time setting in verse 1? What else happened on the 3rd day in the Christian story?

This is spoken of as the first of His signs through which He revealed His glory.

Signs point to something ... What is this sign pointing to?

Outline in your own words.



THURSDAY: A NEW WINESKIN NEEDED NOW!?

There is much talk in these days of a new wineskin for the church ...that the church in 5-10 years will look very different from what it does today.

Many different opinions are expressed ... depending on the various passions and interests of the participants in the discussion. Some of the ideas are based more on our cultural preferences, particularly when it comes to the structure of our worship services or our actions in mission. (though of course we will support our position with biblical texts).

Different answers to the question of what is the New wineskin are:

- House church rather than local church buildings and congregations
- Different structuring of our church services.
- Father / Son Relationships (John Alley)
- Restoration of Five fold ministry including Apostles & Prophets (Mark Virkler, Mark Tubbs)
- Signs and Wonders ...A Revival Culture (Bill Johnson)
- Marketplace ministry ...

Over the next few days we will examine several biblical aspects that may help to identify the new wineskin needed to contain the new wine as we have identified it in this study, namely:

- The kingdom has come
- There is a new covenant
- The Holy Spirit has been poured out on all believers

Consider John 4: 19- 24

Where is the proper place and proper way to worship? Is it the temple in Jerusalem or the mountain in Samaria. These expressions of worship had different practice and were conducted in different holy places.

Jesus answers that neither of these is the correct way ...they represent old wineskin ways of thinking about worship. The new is no longer about one particular place or one particular way of worship.

What matters in the new wineskin is that *the worshippers the Father is looking for are those that worship in spirit and in truth.*

A wineskin exists to serve the wine ... it is the structure that enables the new wine to be poured out efficiently and not lost. It is the structure through which we express the reality of the Kingdom of God and in which we live out the culture of the Kingdom. This is far more than a Sunday worship service.

FRIDAY: A NEW COVENANT REPLACING AN OBSOLETE ONE

Under the Old Covenant the wineskin was centred in the Israelite nation ...an ethnic and geographical entity ... the trappings were external ... types and shadows of what was to come in the new.

That wineskin included the system of Levitical priests / Blood sacrifices / the Covenant under Moses / Tabernacle / Temple / Ceremonial Law / Veil –Curtain / Special Vestments for the Priests ... Etc.

Read Hebrews 8: 1-13 and identify the features of the new covenant.

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Under the new Covenant the trappings of the old are replaced by a new order: Now we have:

- **A new Priesthood with a new High priest** in the order of Melchizedek ... (Hebrews 2:17, 4:14-15, 5:1-10, & Revelation 1: 6, 5:10,)
- **A new Sacrifice** ... Jesus death on the cross (Heb. 7:27, 10:11-14 & 1 Peter 2: 4-5)

Read through the following scriptures and consider what picture they might give of the new wineskin

Under the new Covenant there is:

- **A new Priesthood** ... The people of God ... 1 Peter 2: 9-10
- **A new Temple** ... Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:5
- **A new Way** ... Romans 7:6 ... serving now in the new way of the Spirit
- **One new Man** ... Jew and Gentile together ... Ephesians 2:14-15
- **A new Law** ... James 1:19-27 & 2:8-13. Hebrews 7:12, 10:1-3

The Wineskin is no longer tied to a particular ethnic nor geographic entity – Now Jew and Gentile are brought together No longer is it shaped in regulations about fasting or vestments or ceremonies or priests

SATURDAY: A NEW WINESKIN – GOD’S COVENANT FAMILY

The Church has tended to revert back to the old wineskin: (irrespective of which denominational flavor we consider: Catholic/ Anglican/ Uniting/ Lutheran / Baptist / Presbyterian / Orthodox / Pentecostal...)

We have tended to maintain:

- **Hierarchical Leadership** - Popes / Bishops; Status and Title – Apostle / Pastor
- **The Division of Christians into 2 classes....** A Clergy/ Laity Divide. (Special priesthood / vestments; Pastors with special privileges etc (Green Rooms));
- **Holy Buildings** called Cathedrals / Sanctuaries / Temples / Churches.
Please note: Buildings provide helpful gathering spaces and in their dedication to the Lord and the accompanying worship provide a sense of *presence*. However...the people of God are the *Holy Sanctuary* and we are called to carry *His presence* with us. We are the church not the building.
- **A division between sacred and secular activities.** (*Your real ministry is what you do in your church family*)

We have attempted to put new wine into old wineskins ... bursting the skins

The new wine of the Spirit brought a different dynamic to the early church in Jerusalem

Read & Reflect on Acts 2:42-47

Please understand they took up this way of life not as a *we must* or because someone told them this was how to be church. This was a work of the Spirit ... a grace from Him.

Write notes on what strikes you today as you read.

To what did the early disciples devote themselves as outlined here?

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What would you see as God’s priorities for us collectively as the Body of Christ today?

Do we need a fresh infilling of the Spirit to catch His priorities for us today?

A priority is something we devote ourselves to above other things. (Does our TV viewing or other ‘*me time*’ leisure activities rate as higher priorities for us?)

Ponder this question: What changes are needed in my life for me to take up the priorities of heaven?