

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

Lesson 2 w/ Answers

Seeking the Kingdom of God

We continue our study entitled "Challenging Questions People Ask." In the previous lesson, we learned that although it is difficult to study and understand the Bible, God makes it possible for us by sending us a helper. We also learned that sometimes changing our approach to studying scripture can help us.

In this lesson, we will examine another question, or precept, that I am sure many of us have wrestled with in one form or another. In fact, if we seriously consider it, I am sure that many of us will agree that it is something difficult, if not impossible, to do.

Our question for this lesson:

"Every few nights or so (not every night), I go to bed and think 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.' Then I realize that I have failed to do this. Some days I don't even say the phrase. I need to raise my 'batting average' on this. Any suggestions?"

Let's search for and consider some of the solutions for our struggles with this particular issue.

As we grow in Christ, He teaches us that our first goal should be to seek the Kingdom of God above all other things. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus tells us that we should not be worried or concerned about what to wear, or what to eat, or where these things will come from. Instead, He teaches us that God, our Father in heaven, knows we need all these things already; therefore, we should not spend time worrying over them, but rather spend our time seeking God's Kingdom.

1. So, why would Jesus teach us to not worry about what we will eat or what we will wear, but rather instruct us to seek God's Kingdom first?
 - a. ANSWER: Because if we find the Kingdom of God, we won't worry about our needs because God will provide them for us. Furthermore, if we are living in God's Kingdom, we will see things as He does, we will know His will, and we will live our lives carrying out His will and reflecting His glory—we cannot do these things outside of His kingdom.
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As we seek His Kingdom, we should realize that God's Kingdom is both physical and spiritual. As you study the questions that follow, you will see that God has a very real kingdom, and that it is not just a metaphor. In fact, we know that when Christ returns, He will set up an earthly throne and Kingdom and will reign over that kingdom for a thousand years. However, even today, God's Kingdom is real and exists, and it accomplishes His sovereign will throughout the heavens and the earth.

Before we look more closely at this kingdom, let's consider the other piece of the question, i.e., that we try and sometimes fail, and in fact we sometimes fail to even try to seek His Kingdom. All of us experience these lapses from time-to-time and thus find ourselves bowing before God and asking for forgiveness for our failure.

2. As I thought through this, I realized that there are many examples in the Bible of others who have also failed along these lines. Can you think of some in the New Testament who failed to do as Jesus taught? Consider specifically some of the Apostles, and list below those who were not always trying to seek God's Kingdom first, even though they were being personally taught by Christ and lived and worked with him every day. How many can you list?
 - a. ANSWER: Just to mention a few instances, we can cite Peter's denial of Christ three times, also Peter's hypocritical behavior with the converted Gentiles (which Paul called him out on), and James and John and their argument over who will sit at Christ's right hand.

So, let's look at God's Kingdom and what it means to seek it. Further, let's look at what the Kingdom of God is, where it is, who enters the Kingdom, what the "gospel of the Kingdom" is, and what the "mystery" or secret of the Kingdom of God is.

3. What is the Kingdom of God? Read Romans 14:17-18 and note what it tells you about God's Kingdom.
 - a. ANSWER: God's Kingdom is living in the Holy Spirit. It lives within us when we accept Christ as our savior and God sends His Holy Spirit to live in us. Everyone who has the Holy Spirit living in them is living in God's Kingdom. Our responsibility then is to live a life that reflects the kingdom within which we live, reflecting God's glory in all that we do and constantly seeking to do His will.
4. Where is the Kingdom of God? Read the following and note what they tell us about where the Kingdom of God is:
 - a. Luke 17:20-21
 - i. ANSWER: It's within each of us who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All who have been saved through accepting Christ as their savior have the Kingdom living within them.
 - b. Daniel 2:44
 - i. ANSWER: It will be a physical kingdom established over the whole earth.
 - c. Matthew 12:28
 - i. ANSWER: It is with Christ.
5. Who will enter God's Kingdom? Read the following and note what they tell us about this:
 - a. Matthew 21:28-32
 - i. ANSWER: Those who repent of their sins and accept Christ as their savior.
 - b. Luke 18:15-17
 - i. ANSWER: Only those with faith like a child will enter the Kingdom.
 - c. John 3:36
 - i. ANSWER: Whoever believes that Jesus is the only son of God.
6. What is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God?
 - a. Mark 1:14-15
 - i. ANSWER: The Kingdom of God is near, repent and believe.
 - b. Matthew 4:17
 - i. ANSWER: The Kingdom of God is near, repent and believe.
7. What is the "secret" or "mystery" of the Kingdom of God?
 - a. Mark 4:1-20
 - i. ANSWER: That only some will hear the Gospel and believe and go on to bear fruit.
 - b. Mark 4:21-25
 - i. ANSWER: That nothing is done in secret, that everything is to be brought to light, that we have responsibilities within the kingdom, and that we will be accountable for how we carried them out.
 - c. Mark 4:26-29
 - i. ANSWER: That the Kingdom of God is a growing Kingdom. It began small, but when all of the seed that is planted is fully grown, a harvest will come.
 - d. Mark 4:30-32
 - i. ANSWER: That the Kingdom of God, though starting from a small seed, will grow larger and larger until it is the largest Kingdom.
8. How can we tell when person is nearing the Kingdom of God?
 - a. Mark 12:28-34
 - i. ANSWER: When they begin to understand scripture and are nearly ready to accept Jesus as the Christ who died for their sins.

We can see from this lesson's study that God's Kingdom is real and that we, as born-again followers of Christ, are eternal citizens of that Kingdom. However, if you have ever traveled to a foreign country, you no doubt encountered native-born citizens of that country who represented their country well—as well as others who did not. Our challenge is to live as citizens who represent the kingdom well, and we can do this by beginning each day seeking God's Kingdom, i.e., seeking to do His will and seeking to glorify Him in all that we do. By relying on our Sovereign King and Savior for all our needs and by relying on Him for direction and help in all that we do, we live out our kingdom lives in a way that honors God.

As kingdom citizens, we have many responsibilities. Among them is finding the lost and bringing them into the Kingdom; another is ministering to the needs of those who enter the kingdom. Let's commit to pray for God's Kingdom as Jesus did (i.e., "Your kingdom come"), and let's commit to living out our lives as God's children, living in His eternal care and grace.

Living the Christian life is not always easy; Christ warned us of this. But the Christian life is also a life of peace, joy and blessing. We should live our life each day celebrating the peace and joy that Jesus brings to our lives as we seek to do His will and as we seek His Kingdom, even though it can be difficult. What better Kingdom is there?!

Have a great week everyone, and thanks for studying with us.

In Christ,

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