A Companion to the Course

By Don Stephens
Introduction:
Why Worldview, Glory, and the Kingdom of God?

"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Matthew 7:24

A life well lived is characterized by rich relationships, wisdom, accomplishment, and purpose. A thousand years ago Western church leaders recognized the need for training young believers and began establishing universities and schools to raise up learned men and women to lead history forward. Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and most of today’s leading universities were founded by visionary Christians in order to explore the great questions of life: What is Good? What is True? And What is Beautiful?

Students grew in their understanding of human nature, in their delight of God’s glorious world, and in the natural and physical laws that govern His universe. Life and learning were interconnected. This, in fact, is why we called our institutions “uni-versities”: They taught the “universals” that connected the “diversities” of life. Music and Mathematics were cousins, science and theology were brothers, and nature and grace were sisters in the “world-view” of the Bible.

Alas, in the twenty-first century we have lost our way. Competing ideas bombard our minds daily, from Marxist media and Postmodern TV to Buddhist therapies and Islamic ideologies, leaving us confused and uncertain about how to live. And Christians are by no means immune. Twenty years of experience among the world’s cultures has left me convinced that many, if not most twenty-first century Believers have what author Darrow Miller describes as “born again hearts, and Babylonian brains.”

This short course is a modest introduction of some of the Biblical ideas that have historically blessed the world with justice, compassion, freedom and progress. We will divide the study into three parts:

1. **Glory:** The foundation of everything.

2. **Alternative Worldviews:** The failed possibilities before us: Secularism, Postmodernism, New Age Animism, Communism, Islam, and Gnosticism.

3. **The Kingdom of God:** A Biblical vision of life, hope and abiding freedom.
Glory: The Foundation

Purpose is inherent in a created universe.

To believe in a Creator is to embrace purpose. The great Artist-Designer of all things did His work not haphazardly, but with great care and clear intention. Everything from people to planets, music to mangoes and laughter to lightening was created and designed with meaning and intentional function. There are no left over parts!

Yet a recent Barna survey discovered that only about 40 percent of professing Christians live with a clear sense of purpose. Many are stumbling through their days as if in a dream "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” Apart from a clear understanding of purpose, our lives will degenerate into a pointless succession of years.

The church has failed miserably to teach the magnificent obsession of the Father, Son and Spirit: The Glory of God. This is the reason and purpose behind every created thing, and only by rediscovering glory will the twenty first century church experience the fullness and delight of life itself.

We are Created for Glory.

The Scriptures tell us the driving force behind everything is the glory of God. "For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.” (Romans 11:36 NLT)

"Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." Isaiah 43:6b-7

But what is the Glory of God?

Glory is one of those concepts that carries many connotations ranging from “brightness” and “honor” to “weightiness” and “shining”. But one understanding of glory brings it all together in a beautifully practical way: Glory is the visible reflection of God’s invisible character. Although we cannot see God with our natural, human eyes, we can very clearly see His reflection in the world He has created. Romans 1:20 expresses this thought: "Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made.” This, I believe, is a practical
understanding of the Glory of God. It’s in this sense that Paul explains that "Christ is the visible image of the invisible God," (Colossians 3:15a). And the writer of Hebrews adds that "The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God..." (Hebrews 1:3) Although we cannot see God in person, we can see His reflections all about us. The Hebrews experienced the Shekinah glory in the cloud of His presence that covered the tent of meeting, (Exodus 40:34-35). Paul experienced the glory of God in the form of a bright light on the Damascus road.

The Life, Romance, Relationship, Creativity, Joy, etc., of the Triune God is reflected in the universe He has made.

God’s glory is who He is; It is his beauty, his power, his justice, his mercy, his truth, etc. But since the Creator is invisible, these things remain abstract until He reveals them in what He has made. This was God’s intention in creation, and especially in man who was formed in His very “image”, (think “photograph”). What higher purpose could we imagine than that we mortals would reflect the invisible character of our Creator? This was forever the Father’s purpose, and the very reason He pronounced each act of His creation “good.” It was good because it reflected Him!
Glorifying God is practical.

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

To glorify God is to do what He does. We can glorify God in such simple acts as:
- Planting a garden - because God planted a garden in Eden.
- Organizing our environment - because God brings order out of chaos.
- Serving a neighbor - because Jesus serves us as His neighbors.
- Creating a work of art - because God is both an artist and a creator.
- Blessing a child - as Jesus beautifully demonstrated.
- Building a house - “I go to prepare a house for you.”
- Meeting the need of another - because God is our Jehovah Jireh.

But there’s more!

God takes delight in his glory, and since we humans have been created in His image, we, too, find delight in glory. The great composer Johann Sebastian Bach declared that “The aim and final end of all music should be nothing more than the glory of God, and the refreshment of the soul.” Glory refreshes us! This is why we love beauty, laughter, friendships, sunsets, music and great stories with happy endings. We Christians are the only people in the world who can give a clear and rational defense for why the human race loves these things!

When we study the natural world, we study God’s glory.
- Science is the study of God’s genius.
- Philosophy is the study of His Truth.
- Mathematics: the study of His perfection.
- Aesthetics: the study of His beauty.
- Music: the study of God’s harmony, passion, and delight.
- Literature: the study of God’s ways.

The Glory of God means everything matters!
Understanding Glory is far more than a theological exercise, it is an affirmation that “everything matters” to God, and therefore it should matter to us. Glory takes us beyond the thin, spiritual world of religion and escorts us into a thick world of meaning. It infuses our daily activities with significance and baptizes our vocation in holiness. I no longer endure the drudgery of planting a garden. Instead I partner with the Great Creator in the joyful work of returning fallen nature to its intended beauty and abundance. It’s with this understanding that we lay the foundation of life.
What is a Worldview?

A worldview is a way of seeing the world. It is like a set of lenses through which we look at the world, or like a story we subconsciously tell ourselves about how the world works. Islam is a worldview, as is New Age, Communism, Darwinism or the Biblical Kingdom of God.

Worldviews are determined by our beliefs and ideas about the world and by the way we answer basic questions about life:

- Is there a God?
- What is He like?
- Who is man?
- Does life have a purpose?
- What is the problem with the world?
- How can the world's problem be solved?

In the following pages we will consider six major world views that are popular in today's culture: Secularism, Postmodernism, New Age / Animism, Communism, Islam, and Evangelical Gnosticism. And then by contrast we will investigate the Biblical worldview of the Kingdom of God.

How is a Worldview Formed?

- From ideas passed on to us by our culture, family and friends.
- From our educational experience.
- From our church, mosque, synagogue, and religious community.
- From the media we follow: radio, newspapers, magazines, movies, books, and music.
- From our life experiences: disappointments, challenges, successes, etc.

Worldviews are composed of ideas, and ideas have the capacity to change the world: Democracy, Evolution, Marxism, and Christianity are all ideas which have changed the world for good or for evil.
Ideas have Consequences.

Like seeds, ideas will always produce predictable results. Consider:

• A person who believes human beings are nothing more than highly evolved animals will almost invariably have no problem with abortion and euthanasia. Since both of these practices can contribute to a rapid “improvement” in the gene pool, it makes perfect sense to eliminate the weak, the unwanted, and the aging among us.

• However, those who believe humans are created in the image of a holy God, will have a high regard for human life, treat it with dignity, and reject abortion and euthanasia, as sinful and immoral.

Truth Produces Life, Error and Deception Produce death.

Worldviews will either succeed or fail depending on how true they are. Communism - because it is founded on such lies as the rejection of the spiritual world, and the idea that justice can be achieved by confiscating (stealing) from some and redistributing to others - carries within it the seeds of its own self-destruction. A godless world where people are denied the fruits of their hard-earned labor will end in hopelessness, frustration, addiction, and poverty as surely as watering a garden with gasoline will end in withered plants. Jesus explained this at the end of his sermon on the mount:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." (Matthew 7:24-27)

Six popular Worldviews are presented in the following diagrams with their basic assumptions presented in the left hand column, followed by the consequences of those ideas presented in the second column.
Secularism / Naturalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material world: limited resources, and no spiritual dimension.</td>
<td>Poverty, hopelessness, immorality, tyranny, and corruption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man is an animal descended from primates.</td>
<td>Loss of human dignity, abortion, euthanasia, and genocide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The problem with the world is ignorance.</td>
<td>Intellectual elitism, and pride.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The solution is education.</td>
<td>High technology, but heartless culture.</td>
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Postmodernism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God is anything. Man is anything.</td>
<td>Insanity and confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answers, no story, no absolutes, no meaning.</td>
<td>Despair, anarchy, moral equivalency, and cultural disintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man invents his own meaning and reality.</td>
<td>Bizarre behaviors and “anything goes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The problem is intolerance.</td>
<td>No tolerance for claims of truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the answer is Political Correctness</td>
<td>Tyrannical government, and loss of freedom</td>
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Pantheism / Animism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God is “everything”.</td>
<td>Idolatry, fear and superstition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reincarnation: Man is a wandering Spirit.</td>
<td>Resignation to suffering and the caste system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To think is to remain in ignorance.”</td>
<td>Primitive, poor, and anti-scientific cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The problem is separation.</td>
<td>Conformity and resignation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The answer is Nirvana.</td>
<td>Passivity, fatalism and backwardness.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Marxism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No God, no moral lawgiver.</td>
<td>Immorality, tyranny, and Hopelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man is a worker animal.</td>
<td>Loss of individual dignity, compassion, and human rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State is Sovereign.</td>
<td>Fear &amp; Passivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The problem is unequal distribution of wealth.</td>
<td>Anger, Jealousy, and Greed,</td>
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<tr>
<td>The solution: submission and Sharia law.</td>
<td>Religious war, Bloodshed &amp; death.</td>
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## Islam:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allah is a Master</td>
<td>Tyranny, Immorality, and Hopelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man is a slave of Allah</td>
<td>Personal, cultural and political bondage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning is a sin.</td>
<td>Backwardness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The problem is unbelievers and infidels.</td>
<td>Anger, bitterness, violence, and jihad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The solution: submission and Sharia law.</td>
<td>Religious war, Bloodshed &amp; death.</td>
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## Evangelical Gnosticism / “Religious” Christianity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The “Spiritual” world is good, The “natural” world is evil.</td>
<td>Fragmented lives and abandonment of the Kingdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our goal is to make it safely to heaven.</td>
<td>Escape mentality and unhealthy fixation on “spiritual experiences”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The natural world is evil.</td>
<td>Disengagement with the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gospel is about forgiveness and going to heaven.</td>
<td>A stunted Gospel not for life, but for death.</td>
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The worldview of the Kingdom touches every part of life, from purpose and design to community, science, music, art, education, justice, government, hope and personal wholeness. Nothing is left out, because everything matters to God!

### Comparing Worldviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modern Secularism</th>
<th>Post - Modernism</th>
<th>Pantheism</th>
<th>Communism</th>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is God?</strong></td>
<td>No God</td>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>The State</td>
<td>A Master</td>
<td>A Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is Man?</strong></td>
<td>An Animal</td>
<td>A Spirit</td>
<td>A Worker</td>
<td>A Servant</td>
<td>A Son “In God’s image.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>World’s Problem?</strong></td>
<td>Ignorance</td>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>Unequal Distribution of Wealth</td>
<td>Unbelievers &amp; Infidels</td>
<td>Sin and separation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Solution?</strong></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Nirvana</td>
<td>Revolution &amp; Redistribution</td>
<td>Jihad &amp; Sharia Law</td>
<td>The cross &amp; The Kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"If you want to change society, then you must tell an alternative story. Neither revolution nor reformation can ultimately change a society, rather you must tell a new powerful tale, one so persuasive that it sweeps away the old myths and becomes the preferred story, one so inclusive that it gathers all the bits of our past and our present into a coherent whole, one that even shines some light into the future so that we can take the next step forward."

- Ivan Illich

Western Christianity is in crises. Decades of chasing after wholeness, blessing, enlarged borders, charismatic experiences and cultural victories have left us desperate, disappointed and in disarray. Lawlessness and immorality creep through our cultures like cancer spreading despair while we resign ourselves to the last and final hope of a rapture to whisk us away to heaven. Like the doomed passengers of a sinking ship, we hold on for the hope of a rescue.

Clearly this isn’t the Christianity of the gospels. Escape wasn’t in the mind of the victorious Christ who pressed through the darkness to redeem His broken world. His was a message of hope, of transformation, of filling His creation once again with His glory and restoring all things to the wonder and perfection of Eden. The good news of the Kingdom is not an escape plan to get us into heaven, but a strategy to bring heaven back into His earth. "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:19-20) This is the kingdom.

The great catastrophe of our age is that the church has forgotten the story, the message and the gospel taught by the God-man, Jesus. Over the past several years I’ve been doing some informal research among the Christians I meet, asking "What do you think was the central theme of Jesus' preaching and teaching in the Gospels?" Many consider carefully, before tentatively volunteering, "I don’t know. Being born again?" "Salvation?" "Heaven?" Almost never do I find a person who boldly declares, "Oh... the Kingdom of God, of course!" The message that burned in Jesus heart, that fired his stories and parables, that fed his passion, was the message of the Kingdom.
"Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these (other) things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

Tragically, the Kingdom has all but disappeared from the radar of the Western church. Several years back I searched the inventories of two well-stocked Christian bookstores - one in the US, and another in the Middle East - for a title under the keyword "kingdom." Not a single book appeared in either store! Zero! And yet there were scores of titles, (especially in the American store), devoted to End-Times and the "Rapture".

Check it out:

Below is a Google Ngram showing the number of books (in English) published on sin, hell, Heaven, salvation, and the Kingdom from 1950 until 2000.

Astonishingly, we have authored nearly eight times as many books on hell as we have on the Kingdom! How can this be?

To many in the church, the twentieth century Gospel could be stated as "The good news that Jesus died on the cross to cleanse us from sin, so that we might have eternal life when we die." While it’s certainly true that Jesus secured our forgiveness on the cross, this is only the beginning of the Gospel. We’ve mistaken the entrance for the goal! "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." (John 3:3) The gospel of Jesus is about the Kingdom, yet we have camped at the doorway and turned forgiveness into the whole message! It’s become a gospel for death that doesn’t really kick-in until we take our last breath and pass into heaven!
Consider:

The Kingdom was the first message Jesus taught: 'Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.' Matthew 4:23

The Kingdom was the last message Jesus taught: "After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." Acts 1:3

Jesus declared that the Kingdom was the main thing! "But seek first the Kingdom of God, and all thee other things will be given unto you as well." Matthew 6:33

Paul preached the Kingdom until his dying breath. "Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 28:31

The Kingdom was the focus of Jesus’ parables:

"The kingdom of Heaven is like...

- a mustard seed. (Matthew 13:31)
- a net. (Matthew 13:47)
- a wedding banquet. (Matthew 22:2)
- a merchant looking for fine pearls. (Matthew 13:45)
- a treasure hidden in a field. (Matthew 13:44)
- a sower. (Mark 4:26)
- good seed. (Matthew 13:24)
What is the Kingdom, and what is it like?

• It is every place where God’s will is being done. “Thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:10

• It is everything gone wrong in the Fall being made right again in Christ. “For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.” Colossians 1:19-20

• It is God’s dream for His creation. “The same one who came down is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens in order that he might fill, (make replete, fulfill, influence and make complete), all things.” Ephesians 4:10

• It is the Father, Son and Spirit extending His glory into all of creation. “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” Habakkuk 2:14.

• The Kingdom of God is revealed in the person of Jesus. Colossians 1:19

• God’s Kingdom is here, now, and "not yet." Matthew 6:10

• The Kingdom is comprehensive. It touches every area of life. Colossians 1:20; Romans 8:18-23

• The Kingdom is open to all. John 1:12; Matthew 5:3-10

• The Kingdom makes everything holy. 1 Corinthians 10:31; Zechariah 14:20-21

• The Kingdom is unshakable. Hebrews 11:10

• The Kingdom of God is offensive. It assaults the gates of hell, and will eventually fill all things. Matthew 16:18
If we fail to understand the kingdom, then...

• We will never grow up into our full identity in Christ, or take our place in the Kingdom drama being played out in the world. Like characters in a play, we cannot assume our part until we know the story. We will remain as bystanders hoping to be a part of the action, but never understanding where we fit.

• We will become bored and passive, trying to fill the void with empty pursuits, lifeless religion, and artificial adventure.

• We will trade the hope of God’s glory filling the earth for the gnostic dream of being rescued out of the world by the rapture.

• The earth will be overtaken by darkness and the alternative Kingdoms of Communism, Islam, Babylon, and the New World Order will prevail.

God has written the Kingdom into our hearts:

“He has placed eternity in their heart…” - Ecclesiastes 3:11

The Father has hard-wired the DNA of His Kingdom into our very beings. Jesus affirmed this when he told the Pharisees "The Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21) This explains why people in every culture yearn for beauty, freedom, harmony, hope and redeeming stories. Our heart-hunger for the Kingdom is the driving force behind music, arts, entertainment, and every delightful thing.

Hollywood may not understand theology, but it knows there are certain things that are universally loved and valued. Walt Disney created an entire empire around these Kingdom themes to the extent of building a “Magic Kingdom” of glory, culture, happiness, and adventure - all important elements of God’s eternal Kingdom.
The Kingdom meets every need.

The universal human needs of belonging, significance, and security are all met in the Kingdom. In fact, I believe every human longing is simply an echo of the “eternity” God has written into our hearts: We long for significance because the Kingdom means we are significant. We long for belonging because the Kingdom means we do belong to someone and something greater than ourselves. We long for security because the Kingdom is as unshakable as God himself.

"The kingdom is God's total answer to man's total need."

E Stanley Jones.

- *Is the need for reconciliation among people or nations?* The Kingdom is the answer.
- *Is the need hope?* The Kingdom is the answer.
- *Is the need justice for the poor?* The Kingdom is the answer.
- *Is the need blessing and provision?* The Kingdom is the answer

How does the Kingdom differ from the church?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The CHURCH IS</th>
<th>The KINGDOM IS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God’s family.</td>
<td>God’s domain and government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given spiritual authority in prayer.</td>
<td>Delegated with spiritual <em>and</em> natural authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A visible community of people.</td>
<td>An invisible reality encompassing <em>all</em> of life and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative: It did not always exist.</td>
<td>Absolute: It has always been, from the moment God created, everything was His.</td>
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</table>
The Ways of the Kingdom:

- **The purpose of the Kingdom is the glory of God.** “For everything comes from Him; everything exists by His power and is intended for His glory. To Him be glory evermore.” (Romans 11:36 NLT)

- **The ruling principle of the Kingdom is love.** “One of the scribes went to Jesus during an argument with the Sadducees. He saw how well Jesus answered them, so he asked him, 'Which commandment is the most important of them all?' Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. So love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” (Mark 12:28-30)

- **The language of the kingdom is story and picture.** “Jesus spoke all these things in parables to the crowds; he did not speak to them without a parable. This fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet "I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has been hidden from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 13:34-35)

- **The reach of the kingdom extends through the whole universe.** “He, the very one who descended, is also the one who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things.” (Ephesians 4:10)

- **The culture of the Kingdom is universal.** While other culture contains a mix of good and evil, truth and error, the Kingdom is pure in every way. It reveals comprehensive truth as God intended from the beginning.

- **The currency of the Kingdom is faith.** “Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you.” (Mark 11:24)

Why do we miss the Kingdom?

1. We miss the kingdom when we confuse it with the church. The church is a part of the kingdom, but it is not the kingdom.

2. We miss the kingdom when we confuse it with heaven. Heaven is a part of the kingdom, but the kingdom is much more than heaven.

3. We miss the kingdom when we confuse it with earthly kingdoms. Neither America, Great Britain, or the mega church down the street is the kingdom of God. These are earthly kingdoms which will ultimately crumble before the Kingdom of God.
How does the Kingdom Advance?

The Kingdom advances through:

1. **Kingdom prayer**  
   "Let Your Kingdom come, and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."  (Matthew 6:10)

2. **Kingdom witness, preaching, and discipleship:**  
   "Go and make disciples of all nations..."  (Matthew 28:18)

3. **Surrendering “our” resources to the King.**  
   "For there was no one needy among them, because those who were owners of land or houses were selling them and bringing the proceeds from the sales.”  (Acts 4:34)

4. **Spiritual warfare.**  
   "...The weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds. We tear down arguments and every arrogant obstacle that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obey Christ.”  (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

5. **Acts of compassion, healing, deliverance, miracles, etc.**  
   "Heal the sick in that town and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come upon you!'”  (Luke 10:9)

6. **Conversion.**  
   "Jesus replied, "I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Embracing the King is a presupposition of any kingdom.”  (John 3:3)

7. **Viewing our vocations as spiritual callings,** carrying the truth of God into every vocation.  
   "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”  (1 Corinthians 10:31)  Kingdoms are known for, and advanced by the quality workmanship of their citizens. Workers who do not reflect the values of the kingdom will never advance the cause and scope of the kingdom.

8. **Faithful service.**  
   "...because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.”  Luke 16:10

9. **Bringing Biblical truth into every sphere of culture.** For the artist, it is advanced when he creates beautiful works of art; for the judge it is advanced when he exercises true justice; for teachers and educators it is advanced when he/she equips others to love truth and handle it with integrity.
We Have a Part!

No Kingdom is built by an isolated king sitting on a throne. Kings must have loyal subjects partnering with him to extend his kingdom. This is our part: God, in Christ, first restores His glory in the souls of His people. Then He commissions us to carry His glory, and the liberating truth of His kingdom into all the world. Then he will return to receive his kingdom.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full-grown it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Matthew 13:31-32

The lowly seed was Jesus’ primary metaphor to illustrate the Kingdom: Seeds are small things that grow into surprisingly great things. In the same way the small, simple actions of ordinary believers have great impact in the Kingdom.

Understanding the Kingdom is the key to greater revelation:

In explaining the parable of the sower, Jesus says, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand any parable?" (Mark 4:13) In Matthew 13:19 He goes on to explain that in this parable the seed being planted is specifically the "word of the Kingdom", and that there is a strong attack on behalf of the Enemy to destroy that word. Why would the enemy want to destroy the "word of the Kingdom'? Because this is the word that will undo his works, redeem the nations, and bring his evil empire crashing down around his feet. Jesus seems to be saying that the Kingdom is the lens through which all his parables must be interpreted, and if we miss this, we will be diverted away from the true battle. We will instead believe the parables are about the new birth, forgiveness, life in heaven, how to be blessed, and such.
Why do we miss the kingdom?

1. Because the enemy intentionally obscures it. "The evil one comes and snatches it, (that is, the word of the Kingdom) away..." Matthew 13:19

2. Because we have inherited a Greek worldview of Gnosticism which says "This world doesn't matter. It is a miserable place of suffering from which we need to be delivered. Salvation consists in being taken out of this world and transported back into heaven." This worldview was condemned by the Council of Nicea in 327 AD. It is not, and never has been a Biblical worldview because "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it..." (Psalm 24:1) To the Jewish mind, all of life is sacred. This idea inspired Paul to admonish the (Greek) Corinthian believers, "Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

3. Because we have fallen into a rapture mentality that says Jesus will rescue us out of this present world and carry us off to heaven. Of course Jesus will return, but must he return again as Savior, or will He come as our reigning King? Scripture clearly teaches that He will come to take possession of His Kingdom. (Revelation 11:15)

Camelot: A mythical parable of the Kingdom.

The knights of the round table pledged their lives to King Arthur and the glorious kingdom of Camelot. It was a place of justice, love and brotherhood, where the "sun never set" and where every day was bathed in perfection. Indeed, the glories of Camelot were nothing more than reflections of King Arthur’s sterling soul. Yet Camelot was not established by Arthur alone.

Such a breathtaking realm would require the work and loyalty of countless subjects who each reflected some different facet of the King’s glory.

In the same way, God partners with His people in the establishment of His Kingdom. Each has a part, and every part - regardless how small - is important. Whether you are a Kingdom baker, a brick maker, or a babysitter, every part must be lived well in the service of the King.

The kingdom lays claim to the whole world and welcomes God back into His creation. It enlarges, rather than diminishes the world of the believer. With
Kingdom eyes we notice Jesus in places we never looked before: in the workplace, in nature, in education, in arts and sciences, films, sports and creativity, because every crack and crevice of the Kingdom is to shine with the King’s character and beauty.

The Kingdom offers a story to live, a battle to fight, and a mission to accomplish. It delivers us from the monotony of religion and calls us into something dangerously bigger than ourselves, a vision worth dying for, a hope for all of humanity, and a glorious cause that will resound throughout eternity.