

The Gospel of the Kingdom

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Chapter 1

The progression of revelation

The importance of perspective by C.J. Mahaney

Imagine you are receiving this letter from your daughter who is off at university.

Dear Mom and Dad,

Since I have been at university I have been poor in writing and would like to apologise for not having written before, but will bring you up to date, but before I do please sit down. Are you sitting down? It is very important that you are sitting down before you read this letter.

I have been getting on pretty well since the skull fracture and concussion I received from jumping out of my dormitory window when my dormitory caught on fire soon after my arrival. My concussion is pretty well healed. I only get those sick headaches a couple of times a day. Fortunately my dormitory fire and jump was witnessed by an attendant at a petrol station. He ran over, took me to the hospital and continued to visit me there. When I got out of the hospital I had nowhere to live because of the burnt out condition of my room. He was kind enough to invite me to share his basement bedsit with him; it is sort of small but very cute. He is a very fine man and we have fallen deeply in love, we are planning to get married, we have not set a specific date, but it will be before my pregnancy begins to show. Yes mom and dad I am pregnant, I know how much you are looking forward to being grandparents. I know you will welcome the baby and will give it the same care and devotion you gave me when I was a child.

The reason for the delay in our marriage is because my boyfriend has an infection that I carelessly caught from him, though I know you will welcome him into our family with open arms. He is kind, and although not well educated he is ambitious. He is of a different race and religion to ours and I know your often expressed tolerance will not permit you to be bothered by that.

In conclusion, now that I have brought you up to date I want you to know that there was no dormitory fire, I did not have a concussion or skull fracture, I was not in the hospital, I am not pregnant, I do not have an infection and there is no boyfriend in my life.

However, I have failed history and science, and I wanted you to see these results in their proper perspective.

The importance of perspective

We live in a society where we are bombarded with information from many different sources on a daily basis and we use this information to form opinions, thoughts, preferences, etc., all within the confines of the culture in which we live. Consider these three statements for a moment:

1 I am what I know - we all view life differently based upon what we know
The glasses through which we see and interpret life are based upon that which we know.

2 Everything I know is not all there is to know- we do not know everything.
We never stop learning and are all on a journey of discovery and understanding.
We never arrive at a place where we can say, "I now know everything!"

3 Everything I know is not necessarily so - we look at the world through the glasses of our own learning, yet what we have learnt may not be the whole truth, but only part of the whole.

Therefore, growing up with a particular church background will produce a limited understanding of church. If this understanding and reality of church is not accurate we can miss the full expression of church as God originally intended.

It is important that we learn to take time out of our busy schedules to 'regroup' or evaluate how we are doing. There are pictures where there are images within an image and depending on what perspective you have it will determine what you see in the picture. The way you 'see' a situation will also very much depend on what sort of place you are in personally... are you a 'glass half full' type of person or a glass half empty type of person?

We need to consider perspective because somewhere in the midst of emotions, opinions, and preferences there is truth. Opinions are formed through what we have been taught and through our life experience. Opinions can be very dangerous and even damaging, especially if they are birthed out of error. Just because we've lived it for the past 10 years, does not make it truth! Truth is not necessarily our opinion; in any discussion there is your truth, my truth and the real truth somewhere in between. The truth with which we agree is the very truth we apply to our lives. Some truths are much easier to accept and to apply because they bring comfort rather than challenge:

*For God so loved the world. **John 3:16***

*The name of the Lord is a strong tower. . **"Proverbs 18:10***

Correct and accurate Biblical truth is rarely accepted straight away because God's Word challenges and brings our real motives to the surface. It shines a light on darkness, challenging areas that are out of order in our lives and, unfortunately, this is often when people step back because we have a tendency to retreat to traditionalism, legalism and to what we already know and are familiar with. There are often strongholds that exist in our minds concerning a particular topic and we struggle to break through into freedom

Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father *except through me.*" **John 14:6**

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will testify of me" **John 15:26**

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we instantly move out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. The renewing of our minds, however, takes a lot longer and God continues to work on our minds for the remainder of our lives. With many years of experience in church leadership, it is worth noting that when we allow Jesus access to our lives, and welcome the order of God, the path to freedom can be relatively quick.

It is essential that we learn to base our opinions on the Word of God rather than on our good ideas or our previous experience.

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." **Romans 12:2**

Earlier we mentioned the importance of taking time out to regroup -this means looking at what we believe and determining what is truth; what is opinion and what is just the norm in our lives. Maturity is identifying the lies (or partial truths) that we believe and replacing them with full truth.

It could be said that Man's greatest enemy is not Satan or sin, but ignorance.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." **Hosea 4:6**

In both the original Greek and Hebrew language, the word "ignorance" can convey the understanding of darkness and knowledge can convey the understanding of light.

Jesus said in John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free!" It's not the truth that sets us free but the knowledge, understanding and application of truth. In other words, once we hear a truth we begin a journey of appropriation, or 'making it ours. We easily say, after hearing a good message or after spending time reading the Word: "I've had a revelation!" No - it only becomes a revelation when our lives have been impacted and changed. Let's look at the process of truth becoming a transforming revelation:

Information what I know

When we first hear truth, it is merely information. It may tickle our ears and make us feel good but at this stage it is head knowledge.

if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's Commandments and abide in his love." **John 15:10**

Information alone is not enough, receiving information does not guarantee obedience. This is the start of transformation, the understanding of how God desires you to walk in His Kingdom.

Illumination what I understand

As we begin to meditate on what we have heard and our understanding begins to grow, the knowledge becomes illuminated. It's almost as if a light has been switched on and we begin to see things differently; with a lot more clarity.

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. **James 1:22-25***

*Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, **Luke 24:45***

Transformation - what I begin to walk in

The journey continues. We now understand what we have heard or read; furthermore we begin to change the way we think which leads to a change in the way we walk and live our lives.

*The Truth Will Set You Free So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, 1f you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." **John 8:31-32***

Demonstration revelation - that which has changed me forever

A new way of thinking and walking is no longer temporary or seasonal. Something significant has shifted and our whole outlook or the way in which we discern situations has changed. What originally started as a piece of information has now changed my life in a way that is visible to those around me.

His call and purpose on our lives is about TRANSFORMATION. This impacts lives and begins a process of restoring the order of God.

Conclusion

*The Parable of the Sower Explained Hear then the parable of the sower When u hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes Snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path **Matthew 13:18-19***

As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty" **Matthew 13:23**

Here lies a challenge, understanding the message of the Kingdom leads to the bearing of fruit. It is the evidence of fruit that shows us we understand the message. Too often, we believe that information and knowledge is a demonstration of the Kingdom.

For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. 1 Corinthians 4:20

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit" Matthew 12:33

Chapter 2

The work and the way of God

The work of God

What has God called us to do?

One of the dearest things about the Christian faith is that Christianity is the only religion where our good works don't lead to salvation. So what then is required? When truly becomes Lord and saviour of our lives it means we understand that Jesus has redeemed us through the Cross of Christ, and not our good works, but by grace. We then see that He has a unique plan and purpose for each one of us and He requires our all

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. AND this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workman created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that walk in them. **Ephesians 2:8-10***

Jesus was very clear in His instructions for the work He wanted us to carry on after e left.

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age." **Matthew 28:19-20***

This seems simple enough- but what does it really mean to make disciples of all nations? God's desire is for His manifold wisdom to be displayed in the nations - all nations. His will for each one of us is that our lives are conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). This means that, after we give our lives to Jesus, we should walk a road of healing leading to a place of wholeness from which we can then grow and mature - accurately reflecting and representing Him to those around us because of our love for Him. Mark urges us, as Jesus did, to "...love the The Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind, and love our neighbour as we love ourselves" (Mark 12:30-31). Many church leaders mistakenly believe that a 'good' church means having good meetings, or good worship. No! "They will know you are my disciples by the love you have for one another (John 13:35).

The Greek word for 'Nations' is 'Ethnos'-all the people groups of the world. Ethnos as a collective term can go even further, describing any group of people with a common purpose or character. A community of people with a certain ethnic background within a nation can be an ethnos; a specific youth sub-culture centred around skateboarding can be an ethnos, as can a group of doctors and nurses. This widens the scope of our work as His disciples. We will need all of God's creativity to reach the myriad of sub-cultures and people groups (the ethnos) around us in our communities and work places
God wants His Kingdom displayed amongst the nations, starting with our places of work

work, our local communities and eventually entire countries. God's instrument for carrying this message and displaying His goodness to the nations is His Church. This is not about a building - we ARE the church! Peter describes us as living stones with Jesus being the chief cornerstone (1 Peter 1:5). The original Greek word for church is "ecclesia" which means 'the called out ones with a purpose' 'We have been called by God' as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession..' Why? *Our purpose is "...to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light"* **1 Peter 2:9**

Jesus left His mandate in the hands of the disciples with the Holy Spirit as their helper. Church, however, is not the end but only a means to an end. If we live as though it is an end in itself, the church can only become idolatrous and impotent. When people present the church as the answer or the source, they set up those inside and those outside for disappointment and disillusionment.

Jesus values diligent workers

There is an enormous task for the church to undertake. The Bible says that Jesus will not return to reign in the earth until the message of the Kingdom has been taken to every people group (ethnos) on the planet (Matt 24:14). In the parable of the talents we see God harshly judging the servants who did not undertake the work as fruit in their lives.

Jesus said that we will show that we love Him by obeying His commandments and He then goes as far as to say that His family are characterised by their obedience and diligence.

"And answering them, he said, 'who are my mother and my brothers?..behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother, sister and mother" **Mark 3:33-35**

It is not enough to merely know the will of God; we must do what He says, James urges us to "prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22). He goes on to say that if we engage with the Word we will not forget what was read, but will become an effective worker and be blessed in all that we do. But Jesus also wants to bless us for the work that we have done for Him. What then is our reward? The rich harvest of fruit in our lives. "By this is my Father Glorified , that you bear much fruit and prove to be My disciples" (John 15:8). God's intent is that this 'fruit' will last and feed not only our local communities, but every ethnos in which we have influence (Psalm 1:1-3; John 15:4). Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Colossians 1:9).

I chose you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruits should remain.
John 15:16

Faith and work

When we encounter the King of Kings and fall in love with Him, we enter a covenant relationship with Him (Genesis 15:9-21). As in a marriage, partners long to display love for each other and to do things that bless their spouse. Similarly, in our relationship with Jesus, our love for Him should automatically translate into actions and work; flowing from the love for our Father and our Saviour and for His people and the lost that He loves (1 John 2:3-6).

In the book of Revelation, Jesus rebuked the Church in Ephesus for losing their first love (Revelation 2:2-5). They were working very hard, doing the things of God and looking productive and strong from the outside, but were their works motivated and flowing out of their love for Him? They had some of the external signs of people who were serving their King but were empty of heart, the motive of love.

The writer of Hebrews states that believers must repent and turn away from 'dead' works; those deeds that look correct and may even be according to the Word but lack the love that underpins them. He is love and those who abide in Him abide in love and He abides in them (1 John 4:16). So, providing our motives are right (James 4:1-5), God promises to give us everything we need to accomplish the work that we are called to do.

*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" **2 Corinthians 9:8***

In the account of Elijah in the book of 1 Kings, God instructs Elijah to go somewhere without possessions, or any way of sustaining himself. He has been called by God to accomplish a task that will be life-threatening, but trusts that God will care for him. God had commanded the ravens to provide food for him at a specific brook called Cherith. There was not a day that passed in which the ravens did not bring Elijah what he needed and it was only when the brook dried up and Elijah had no more water that he knew it was time to move on. It is important to note that it was God who commanded the provision (Philippians 4:19). Elijah did not demand provision before obedience, but God provided when the prophet was obedient to His will. Father God is not like Father Christmas - we are not to hang around at the brook and ask for his blessing. Provision is linked to vision and vision must be aligned to the will of God (John 15:7-10).

It is vital that we don't fall into the habit of only seeking God's hand of provision in our lives; we must also seek His face - His will for our lives. The wonderful thing is, however, that when we seek His face, not for what we can get from Him, but to build an intimate relationship with Him, then we always get His hand of provision and blessing too; according to His will.

*Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face continually" **Psalms 105:4***

The cost

Although there is a promise of plenty for those who follow Him, God does not want the benefits that come with following Him to be the deciding factor in our walk with Christ. He wants a genuine faith, motivated by love and a desire for God to be glorified.

*"But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you." **Matthew 6:33***

When Jesus met the rich young ruler of Mark chapter 10, he could very well have been persuaded to become a disciple in order to get the benefits of that kind of decision. Rather than highlight the benefits, Jesus targeted the area of the man's life where he would feel it the most; he was a very wealthy man and would need to sell all his possessions in order to follow Him. It is important to remember that right at the beginning of the conversation, the rich young man was eager and it would not have been hard to persuade him with a 'cheaper' message. Jesus however, doesn't work like that and makes it costly for people to come to know God, highlighting the idols in our lives.

We need to make sure that, when we lead people to Christ, they are aware of the personal cost not only in dying to self, but also the cost of time, finances, energy and sometimes even family and friends. Although salvation is a free gift to us, doing His Kingdom work costs us everything. What price are we prepared to pay to serve God? We have friends who, determined to walk in the purposes of God for their lives, gave away their healthy business. They first valued it, tithed the full value, and then gave it away as they moved countries in obedience to His call. Today they are walking in much blessing and lack nothing. We cannot out-give God (Luke 6:38). This doesn't necessarily mean that we are to give away or lose our material possessions but we must hold it all lightly realising it is God who gives, and God who takes away (Job 1:21).

The way of God

There are many Christians who understand their purpose in God and desire to serve Him wholeheartedly but struggle with knowing how to. A lack of vision is not the issue - in fact many leaders have wonderful, God-inspired vision. Vision, before it has been broken down into bite-sized, strategic and achievable steps, remains merely a dream. This is where leaders, who struggle with strategic thinking, need to glean from others who are more gifted in this area. It is essential that we hear from God for each stage of implementing the vision.

The other struggle is to do with our human nature. It always amazes me when I realise the extent to which we are creatures of habit. Have you ever noticed how quickly the Congregation claim 'their' seats for meetings? We also love comfort and many people find doing things in a new and different way quite daunting. God is the King of His kingdom and as heirs of this Kingdom it is essential that not only do we know and love God, we also need to do things His way. This means hearing God afresh for each situation or season.

The only way

*Jesus said I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but through me." (John 14:6). If He is the only way to the Father, it is imperative we do not try any other paths. Any alternative way of doing things will result in failure according to God's standards and will not have his covering, blessing and provision **Matthew 7:13-14***

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord **Isaiah 55:8***

God wants His ways to become our ways.

The man and his house

Jesus said those who come to Him and hear His words and act upon them are like the man who built his house on the rock. He dug deep and laid a foundation on the bedrock. When a flood rose, the torrent was not able to sway his building and it stood firm. This contrasts with the man who did not obey God - the one who "has heard but does not act accordingly" (John 6:47-49) has found the works of his hands destroyed when attempting to build his way instead of God's way. The bedrock in this parable is Jesus. He is the Way. "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Elijah and the brook

Let's take a minute to go back to Elijah at the brook. What would have happened if he had decided he would rather go to a different brook? What if the brook Cherith was out of his way, or he found a brook that would surely serve the same purpose that was much closer? If Elijah had relied on his own understanding and had gone to any other brook but the Brook Cherith, he would have missed the provision of God (1 Kings 17:4). As much as he may have implored God to meet him at his point of need, he would have been outside God's will and therefore not fulfilling the purpose of God. Solomon was the wisest of all men but he wrote "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

David and the Ark

The ark of God symbolised to Israel the presence of their God with them. The ark was taken during a Philistine raid and was lost for many years. When David became king, he knew the fate of Israel was entwined with the ark. David believed the will of God was to get the ark back in order for His presence to be amongst the people again (2 Samuel 6). David instructed his men to carry out the work of bringing the ark from the Philistines camp, back to Israel. He really went to town, exhausting all his resources to make it

happen in style. He deployed thirty thousand men, and even commissioned a brand new cart to be made for the occasion. As the men loaded the ark and began to travel, many musicians played on exquisite instruments and they worshipped with "all their might" (2 Sam 6:5). All went well until one of David's well-meaning men, Uzzah, tried to stop the ark from tipping as one of the oxen stumbled. A noble thing to do, surely as he thought he was protecting the ark. However, this went directly against the command God had given Moses concerning the ark - no man was to touch it! This was part of the how to in getting the ark back. This simple act resulted in Uzzah being struck dead for the people's irreverence. David could not believe that God had not found favour with his efforts and was offended and confused with his failure. In his anguish he asks God why this happened. He eventually realises his disobedience and returns to the instruction given by God to Moses about how the ark was to be moved - on poles, carried on the shoulders of the Levites (Exodus 25:10-16).

As David returned the ark correctly, there was freedom and rejoicing -and success! David repented and God blessed him for doing His work, His way.

We must put aside our pride of we know best' and honour God by seeking and obeying His way.

Moses and the rock

Another good example of how important it is to do things God's way is the story of Moses in the desert with some very thirsty people. On the first occasion God spoke to Moses and instructed him to strike the rock three times with his staff (Exodus 17:6). Moses obeyed and water flowed freely from the rock for all the Israelites to enjoy. Later on, they again complained and this time God instructs Moses to speak to the rock. Moses did not speak to the rock but, because he was angry, struck the rock (Numbers 20:8-12). As a dire consequence, because that was not the way God had instructed him, God called Moses a disobedient servant and he lost the privilege of entering the Promised Land. The frightening thing is that, even though Moses did not honour God, water still flowed from the rock. At times we will carry out the work of God not in His way, and we may get results. It is vital to note that, in God's eyes, success is not always measured by results. There are always consequences when we are disobedient.

Maturity in choosing

To walk with Jesus involves many choices. 1 John 2:6 says that we must walk in the same manner He walked. The Bible says that we should be perfect (Greek: Telios) just as our Heavenly Father is perfect (Matt 5:48). The word Telios' can also mean complete, fully grown, mature, lacking nothing. Are you complete and whole and walking in God's ways? God is still requiring this of His church today. We are bombarded with choices all the time; we can choose to sit, stand or walk in the ways of God or our own way. Proverbs makes the consequences of what will happen very clear if we choose to walk in our own way: "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12).

A sign of maturity is being able to walk with both knowledge and zeal in the ways of the Lord. Too many hasty decisions have been made because people have not had both the godly wisdom and the knowledge of God to make their choices. I have seen Christian friends who have spoken words of God's truth to others in the wrong way or at the wrong time. There were zealous all right but not wise about how to handle the situation in the way Jesus would. The Bible says that it is not good to have zeal without knowledge, and we are not to be hasty and miss the way (Proverbs 19:2; James 19:2).

We cannot talk about the work and way of God without considering our attitude. Isaiah 1:19 says "If you are willing and obedient you will eat the good of the land". The key words here are 'willing' joined to 'obedient'. Far too easily we sing songs on a Sunday proclaiming to be prepared to do anything for Him. We declare how we will lay down our lives for Him but a willing heart is not enough. When it comes to the crunch or when the heat gets too much, many Christians struggle with continued obedience. In other words, they may be willing but they are not always obedient. On the other hand, many are obedient to the letter but often lack a willing heart. It is almost as if they are doing God a favour and begrudge the personal sacrifice they make. It is a privilege to serve but we need to remain focussed on the broader vision. We often quote the phrase 'where the vision isn't clear, the cost is always too much.' (Anon)

A new way

It is true to say that if we continue to do what we have always done, we will continue to get what we have always got! Let us be willing to do things a new way. It may be different to the way we have always done it, but will bring different results, achieved God's way. We need to be prepared to be consistently enquiring of the Lord. Let us take off the glasses of our past experiences and expectations and say to God "I want to do this Your way"

The following poem really stuck a chord with me when I first read it some years ago. It is a warning to leaders - we need to take our responsibility we have for God's people very seriously. If we are doing God's work our way, we run the risk of leading His people astray.

'Twas a sheep not a lamb
was a sheep, not a that strayed away
in the parable we are told;
A grown-up sheep that had gone astray...
From the ninety and nine in the fold.

Out in the meadows, out in the cold,
'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd sought:
Back to the flock and into the fold
'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd brought

And why for the sheep should we earnestly long
And so earnestly hope and pray?
Because there is danger if they go wrong
They will lead the young lambs astray.

For the lambs follow the sheep you
Wherever the sheep may stray;
If the sheep go wrong, it will not be long
Till the lambs are as wrong as they.

with the sheep we earnestly plead
For the sake of the lambs today,
If the lambs are lost, what a terrible cost
Some sheep may have to pay.

Chapter 3

It all begins with Father

What kind of Father is revealed in the bible?

What God revealed to us through the Bible is relational to the core. Everything in creation and life flows from the irrefutable knowledge that He is our Father and He longs for us to relate to Him as His own sons and daughters.

God's heart for relationship comes through in the first chapters of Genesis where we see that Adam walked in the garden with God. When you walk with someone there is a sense of dwelling together, side-by-side, close, and not far off or distant. God brings Eve to Adam as his wife, a beautiful picture of a father giving away his daughter as a bride. At that moment family is firmly planted and established, right from the very beginning of Creation and in the very centre of God's plan. Father is source and sustainer: He is the beginning of every good thing and the fulfilment of life itself.

Despite this powerful picture of a perfect father's relationship with his children, we cannot ignore how our own personal experiences of imperfect earthly fathers can affect how we see and relate to God as our Heavenly Father

What does the word father mean to you personally? What does it mean in the context of your culture? Our understanding shapes our perceptions and expectations of how a father should behave towards us and how we consequently relate to him.

Does the word father excite us, threaten us, or leave us numb or indifferent? If we feel any of the latter three, there could be a problem in our experience and understanding.

In modern western UK culture, a positive, healthy image of father has been attacked, eroded and, in some senses, destroyed. Young people often experience abusive, distant, absent, or ill-equipped fathers who are not involved or engaged in their lives. In the media fathers are often portrayed as a bit of a fool, weak, dysfunctional, having no the backbone and usually the butt of the joke. Examples of this include: Peter Griffin (Family Guy) Homer Simpson (Simpsons); Phil (Modern Family); Jim Royle (Royle Family); Derek Trotter (Only Fools and Horses); Marshall Eriksen (How I met Your Mother).

There is also the gender equality issue: why father and not mother or parent? The Bible example is clear that the character of God is only represented when male and female are both present. God is not male, God is not female. However, God chooses to reveal Himself to us as Father. Just as someone is described as 'the father of modern medicine: or 'the father of the light 'Father' indicates a source. This is confirmed when God is called, 'the Father of lights' in James 1:17. He is the source of everything good, He is the source and sustainer of life.

The World Wars

in the nations affected by the two world wars, included most of Europe, Japan, USA and Australia/New Zealand, the function of Father has undergone trauma.

The families that survived the first and second world wars, were often left with emotionally, spiritually and mentally broken fathers. Men who left with a believe in God returned with their faith shattered by the horrors of conflict.

The sons and daughters of the first 1914-1918 war represent one generation and then history repeats itself in the second 1939-1945 world war for a subsequent generation; double the damage.

The sons and daughters who were born to the men returning from these wars are the age of my parents today, roughly in their 70s. Since the scarred fathers struggled to take up their fathering role, the women had to become strong to look after and lead their families. Satan used the circumstances to push his destructive agenda resulting in a generation of young people casting off restraint in the 60s and early 70s -the era of free love and rebellion. Growing up with fathers who struggled to show affection and love, who were stiff as a board, and who were closed down emotionally, society reaped a harvest of depression, behavioural problems and community fragmentation.

The answer is not just salvation, it is reconnection with their Father

It is not enough for Christians to tell people in the context of our western culture they need Jesus to save them from their sins. The problem is that they have lost connection with their source and sustainer, they have lost sight of Father God. Society is left with a system that says, 'if you need help, go to the government' 'if you need education, go to the government' 'if you need work, go to the government' 'if you need money, go to the government.'

Everything is post-modern now with few absolutes and an acceptance of multiple truths. There is also an ever weakening standard for morals.

God wants to use physical and spiritual fathers and mothers to restore an authentic example of Father God's character, function and heart to this generation.

Part of teaching spiritual fathering is he taking up of responsibility for another generation, empowering and cheering on the next generation to go further than the generation before, ensuring our ceiling becomes their floor.

The effect and potency of fathers operating in our lives is such that if satan can destroy an accurate much of God's original intent for us as His children

Let's look at Abraham's role as father briefly:

12v1 *The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*[b]

The promise of Father God to Abraham produces the father off nation., not the leader of a nation. We understand that idea today as we look at great figures Nelson Mandela, described as a 'Father of South Africa'

The term 'Father' today is meant to be a blessing to families and nations just as it was with Abraham.

To understand Father we must see a Son

Jesus said. 'Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father... 'John 14- 9 He came to reveal and make known the Father to us. Why is this so important? Why should we need the Father revealed to Because it is God's heart. character and role as father that he wants revealed to the nations.

Father, in both the Greek and the Hebrew, means source and sustainer we have seen that in James 1:17 it says, 'Every good and perfect is from above coming down from the Father of lights' Father of lights means source of lights.

This is a powerful principle. Consider the following:

Take a plant, when it dies, where does it go? For the plant to live it must remain attached to the the root system draws nutrients and water to survive. There is relationship between the plant and the soil in life and in death.

The same is true for a cow. What is a cow made of. The elements that come from dirt. To live the cow must eat grass... what is grass? Dirt.

For men and women it is more complicated a person comes from the mothers body and is made up of spirit, soul and body.

Body first: what happens when we die? The body will go back into the soil. For the body to survive, the body must eat what? Dirt. Adam was fashioned our of earth and whatever is in the earth is now in man. A person must remain connected to the source from which it was taken, if he or she wants to live and flourish. Where we where we're going, and what we need to survive these are principles of nature and are exactly the same for man.

What about the Spirit? Where does your spirit come from? God breathed into Adam and he became a living being. Thus is what makes us different from plants, cows fish birds and the whole of Creation, we are made in the image of God and Gods Spirit. For a person to remain alive, they must be connected to their source . God as Father is that source. From Him comes all life.

For families to survive and flourish they must be connected to their source.
For communities to survive and flourish they must be connected to their source

Jesus entrusts us with His Great Commission to disciple people, families, communities and nations. In other words, His Great Commission to see them reconnected to their source Father God.

Jesus effectively says this when He declares, 'I came to reveal the Father (your source). If you've seen me, you've seen the Father (your source). For I and your Father (source) are one.'

Jesus introduces us to the Father and restores our connection to Him.

Salvation is more than just a change in our eternal destiny. It is a realignment with our original source.

Let's consider what Christ achieved at the cross. When we think about the cross from our perspective it is the most important event affecting our lives. Nothing happens in our lives until we accept the free gift of the full complete work of Jesus on the cross for us. But for Jesus the cross was a means to an end, not merely an end in itself. John 10:9-10 states, 'I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.'

Where does that life come from? It comes from our source. Being a Christian has nothing to do with receiving a Willy Wonka golden ticket to heaven, enduring a miserable life on earth until He takes us to 'glory'. God wants us to display the godly fathering that the world is crying out for. We have been guilty of making evangelism a tool to grow our churches, rather than a means to introduce people to our Father. We are more interested in growing our institution than sending sons and daughters into the community to love the community and reconnect them with the Father.

Chapter4

Jesus' life message

Have you ever considered what was the life message of Jesus? Why do you think Jesus actually came to the earth? Many of us have been taught that He came to bring the salvation message. In one sense, yes, this is of course true; without Jesus and His work on the cross there is no forgiveness of sins and salvation for our souls, but salvation was not His focus. Surely, if salvation were the only reason He came, then, after we have received salvation, shouldn't we go immediately to be with Him in heaven for eternity? NO - Jesus presents us with a much bigger purpose than this. Jesus came with the exciting, dynamic and powerful message of the Kingdom of God.

What was preached concerning Jesus' ministry, in preparation of his arrival? -
A quotation from the book of Isaiah.

*In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: Make His paths straight' **Matthew 3:1-3***

When John said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, he was declaring that, with the arrival of Jesus, the Kingdom of Heaven [or Kingdom of God] was about to break out onto the earth. God's kingdom of light, invading the kingdom of darkness and spreading throughout the whole earth, brings in its wake a total transformation of life, communities and nations. The arrival of this Kingdom and the impact and transformation it inevitably brings was Jesus' life message and the message He preached at every opportunity. From the very start of His ministry Jesus spoke of the Kingdom

*"From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" Matthew 4:17 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the kingdom of God" **Mark 1:14***

*"But he said to them, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose. And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea" **Luke 4:43-44***

With the advancing of the Kingdom, Jesus brought forgiveness from sin, cleansing miracles and healings. Again, the cross was not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Jesus is 'the door of the sheep' (John 10:7) and a door is designed to lead somewhere. That somewhere is the Kingdom of God. Above all, He brought reconnection with the Father and a reordering of lives according to the rule and reign of God. Jesus is King of the Kingdom of God and its subjects are those who carry out His will.

Are you part of God's Kingdom? This question is answered by identifying the most important thing in your life - and by identifying whose will you are carrying out. Someone who believes in God, Jesus and the Bible, but lives for himself, or herself is not part of the Kingdom of God.

An earth-shattering declaration made by John the Baptist in John's gospel gives divine insight into Jesus' function while on the earth:

*"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" **John 1:29***

The phrase 'Lamb of God' is designed to reveal Jesus as the sacrificial lamb who makes atonement for the world. Atonement, or propitiation, has two parts: a separation from evil, and a joining to good. The first part breaks the power of sin over our lives and cleanses us from its pollution; and the second brings purity, holiness and the order of God to every area of our lives - to our actions, our finances, our relationships, our thought lives, our emotions, and our dreams and desires.

The Kingdom message continued throughout His ministry as a consistent life message:

*"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" **Matthew 3:2***

*Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom' **Matthew 9:35***

*And He said, How shall we meet picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? **Mark 4:30***

*And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing" **Luke 9:2***

*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" **John 3:3***

We see the message still at the core of His teaching at the end of His earthly ministry and just before His ascension.

*To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God. **Acts 1:1-3***

Once established, the message of the Kingdom remained after His earthly ministry ended and continues as our Great Commission to this day.

The book of Acts confirms the disciples' continuation with Jesus' message of the Kingdom: Philip preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God in (Acts 8:12); Paul in Ephesus reasons and persuades them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 19:8); Leaving Ephesus Paul states how he has preached the Kingdom among you all' (Acts 20:25); Paul testifies solemnly about the Kingdom of God in Rome (Acts 28:23 & Acts 28:30-31).

Jesus' life message should be our life message

The life message of Jesus Christ should become our life message if we call ourselves by his name, as Christians.

*"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." **Matthew 24:14***

*And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" **Mark 16:15***

We have been charged by Jesus, not to preach a four point salvation message (God loves you, you have sinned, Jesus has died for your sin, through faith in Jesus we are saved), but to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Compare the two parables in Matthew chapter 13 that Jesus deliberately tells one after the other. In the first parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-9) He presents the seed as the word of the Kingdom, the life message of Jesus. When the word takes root in the lives of hearers, they grow to maturity and produce fruit.

In the very next parable of the Wheat and the Tares with its subsequent explanation (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43), Jesus presents the sower as himself and the seed as the sons of the Kingdom. The message is clear: we are to receive the Good News of the Kingdom of God, nurture the message as we grow to maturity, bear godly fruit that will impact lives and nations, and allow Jesus (Lord of the Harvest-Matthew 9:38) to sow us into the world.

This is why the world will never be changed by the sending of books, tracts, Christian programmes, or internet websites; these can only be support tools aiding the vital work of sons and daughters of the Kingdom of God physically planting themselves within local communities amongst the nations of the world.

Jesus attacks the religious leaders of His day for twisting God's original intention.

Matthew 23- "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.
.Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves...

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. "You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness..

Dead religion announces itself; Kingdom comes upon us and changes everything around us like yeast in dough (Luke 13:20). Kingdom is a worldview that practically manifests itself in transformed communities. Dead religion imposes man-made rules that alter the surface appearance, but nothing deeper.

As leaders in Jubilee, we have seen many Christians who have been disillusioned by experience of dead religion and consequently find themselves on the verge of giving up on church. As they understand the Kingdom message, they regain new life, fresh vision and realign themselves with God's purpose for their lives. We have heard these words spoken by many older Christians who were brought up on an emphasis on

the salvation message, 'Why wasn't I taught this (20, 30, 40) years ago?'. The Kingdom message brings life.

No wonder Jesus devoted His three years of public earthly ministry to the one message that would change the world: the message of the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 5

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 11:4 different gospels' from the one that Christ and the disciples preached. We find that the Gospel of the Kingdom is not the only 'gospel' preached by Christians. The so-called 'gospel of salvation' and 'gospel of the church' which when preached, are not good news to the world. The so-called 'gospel of salvation' places focus on being saved as the goal of our earthly lives. Christians understand well Jesus as saviour, but do not understand so well Jesus as Lord. The so-called 'gospel of the church' places focus on the distinctives of that particular church or denomination to which the person joins, promoting the institution and demanding conformity to a certain way of speech, dress, prayer, and usually adoption of a specific creed.

Jesus preached the true gospel. He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom.
What is the Kingdom?

What is the Kingdom?

The Greek word for kingdom is Basileia, translated as 'royal power, kingship, dominion and rule:

The modern dictionary's definition of kingdom is -"A territory, state, people or community ruled or reigned over by a king or queen

God could have chosen any form of government: a democracy, a republic with a president, socialism, etc. However, He firmly chose a kingdom - where God as the king conducts His rule and reign. Another word for His government is theocracy, where God is firmly the ruler and leader.

In the Western world, we possess a democratic mindset in which the will of the majority is adopted by all. God has not chosen this method of government for His church. The carnal (selfish and self-centred) always rules in a democracy, because decisions tend to be based upon the lowest common denominator and "what is best for ME" In God's Kingdom, He rules as the supreme king upon the throne.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is the good news of the rule and reign of the King- it is good news to all men! However, if we develop a wrong or warped understanding of the Kingdom of God we will not enter into the fullness of what God has prepared for us.

*"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" **Matthew 24:14***

*The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the Kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." **Luke 16:16***

What kind of gospel do we as Christians preach today?

Since Jesus preached the message of the Kingdom of God, Christians have preached various other messages containing varying degrees of biblical truth including:

- The sinner's prayer, or ticket to heaven'
- The Alpha Course
- The Purpose Driven Life
- The Prosperity Gospel
- Seeker friendly services, or we want you to feel comfortable'
- Cheap grace, or 'don't worry your behaviour doesn't matter because God loves you'

How do these messages relate to the rule and reign of the King? If internal change followed by evidence of obedience to the will of Jesus is not the result of our preaching then do we have the correct message?

Top down, inside out

The Kingdom of God is designed as a top down, inside out' kingdom.

Top down' describes the influence from heaven to earth of Jesus' lordship and authority as stated in the prayer Jesus taught His disciples:

*Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' **Matthew 6:10***

Inside out' describes how Jesus then changes us with internal transformation, dealing with motives and attitudes. Jesus made this point to the Jewish religious leaders when they challenged His lack of ceremonial washing before He ate:

*But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. **Luke 11:39***

Consider the transformation of the demon-possessed man met by Jesus.

*They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, Which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!!" For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. **Luke 8:26-29***

The people tried to change the man externally, make him conform to what they considered normal; they even bound him, yet external pressure and externally applied government never changed him. Jesus did not attempt to clothe him and make him look like a Christian, but dealt with the root of the problem.

All too often we, as Christians, try and make people conform to certain behaviour and make people look respectable by addressing the fruit without addressing the bad root. Doing correct actions or carrying out good works without the right motive has a name: dead religion. The Kingdom message results in us looking more like Jesus, 'conformed to the image of His Son' (Romans 8:29), in our behaviour, speech and attitudes. The reason we change is not because of externally applied rules, but because we don't want to hurt our 'Dad in heaven'; we hate what he hates and love what he loves - our core motives have been transformed at the root of our lives. The result? Fruit.

The Rich Young ruler in Mark chapter 10 had missed both parts of the Kingdom message, 'Top Down' and 'Inside Out':

17 As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good. 19 But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honour your father and mother.' [a]" *20 "Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young."* *21 Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."* *22 At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. (properties) **Mark 10:17-22***

Being a citizen in the Kingdom of God involves being subject to the will of the King. The Rich Young Ruler was conforming to his understanding of the basic requirements of

Religious duty, but while still exercising his own will. This is not 'Top Down' but 'Bottom Up' living. Jesus immediately puts His finger on the wrong motive in the man's heart: his true god preventing internal transformation is money and possessions. The man's external conformity to religious behaviour was impressive-but this is opposite of Kingdom.

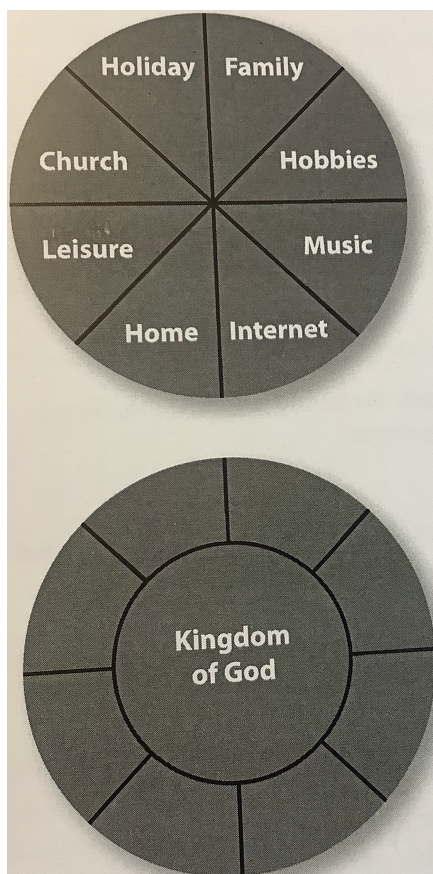
- How much of our Christian life is the wrong way round!
- How much have we brought about by external conformity according to how we think as Christians should behave?
- How many times have we attempted to change the behaviour of others without dealing with the root motives?
- Please don't swear, I'm Christian
- That's not a very Christian thing to say

The Kingdom of God has appeared when men and women carry out the will of the King from right motives. Top Down, Inside Out.

Kingdom is the rule and reign of God, the order of God

Romans chapter 10 verse 9 declares, if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved! Becoming a Christian involves placing Jesus as number one in our lives, making Him Lord. Jesus cannot be lord over a part of our lives - He is either lord of all or not at all. When rebels are defeated by the ruler of a country, they have to lay down their weapons and submit fully to the laws of the land. The rebels are not allowed to keep a few of their weapons, or allowed to follow just some of the laws.

When we submit our hearts to our new master, lordship implies that every area of our lives must be subject to the will of the new King-whether finances, career, relationships, thought life, sin issues, forgiveness issues, etc. Withholding any part of ourselves back from access to God's will, hurts God, hurts ourselves, and hurts others.



Many Christians live their lives from a self-centred mindset where God is a slot, which is in competition with the other slots:

All of the various components of our life are treated as slices of pie, each wanting attention.

When we make Jesus Lord, we place the Kingdom of God at the centre of our lives. The nasty stuff is removed and the other valid pie slices are now subject to the will of our King.

Who rules and reigns over your life?

Do you make decisions based on Jesus' will or do you consistently revert to what makes you more comfortable and what decision is the easiest, least painful and least costly?

The Kingdom message can also be viewed as the order of God. From Genesis chapter one we can see God's Spirit bringing order out of chaos. The first relationship established outside of the Godhead community (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is a father-son relationship. Father God then establishes the husband-wife covenant from which the order of every family and society is derived. When there is order in the parents, there is order in the family. When there is order in the family, society and community flourishes. Every crime and problem in society can be traced back to a breakdown in family order and function.

When we pray 'Your Kingdom come' in our lives, we are asking for God's order to enter and change our lives. Are your relationships working in a godly manner? Are your finances working according to godly principles? Is the future life you are working hard towards serving the will, plan and purposes of God?

When God's order is established, lives work, communities flourish and life is exciting.

Please do not think God's order is dull or unspontaneous. The Kingdom of God is a place of excitement, growth, discovery and adventure.

So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who Came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. John 10:7-10

Jesus is the door to the Kingdom. Where God's order is not present, there is destruction. Jesus does not just bring life, He brings it in abundance.

We have a phrase that we regularly quote and by which we constantly live - "we do life together" We encourage singles, families and groups to plan adventures. we have taken groups shark-fishing in Namibia, climbing Kilimanjaro, walking the Great Wall of China, bungee jumping off bridges.

We think this honours God. Our lives should be an amazing expression of who our God is.

Sometimes the most pleasing thing we can do is have some fun and live life. Why is Our joy sometimes so deep that no one can actually see it!

The fear of the Lord leads to life, not meetings.

Sunday morning when church meets together should be an expression of the life we live. When last did you shout, laugh, or dance in worship?

Christians should have something to offer

If the Bible contains the answers to all of life's problems and is 'the authority for our faith and conduct, then our personal lives and our church family should have much to offer the community in which we are located. At Cotn, we had the privilege of being invited by the local council to join an events group for the regeneration and organising of events that would benefit the town. Why did they ask us? - Because they saw the

out working of biblical principles in our church.....they saw the order of God.

We regularly ask ourselves the question- if our church disappeared today, would the people around us notice? The answer to this question, when the Kingdom is lived and demonstrated, should be a firm YES.

Chapter 6

The 'Gospel of the Church' and the 'Gospel of Salvation'

The so-called 'Gospel of the Church'

The Gospel of the Church focuses on the church institution and all the do's and don'ts that are associated with that particular church. It is when the culture of my church has become the ultimate truth to adhere to. Its roots can be traced back to the erroneous division of the sacred and the secular made under Augustine of Hippo, more in line with Plato's Greek Philosophy than biblical Christianity. At this time, the clergy were put in charge of spiritual and religious matters, and were separated from the laity, i.e. the rest of the people. We still see the consequences of this theology today where the church community has grown separate from the culture of the current time, with its ethos and ways that are generally foreign and irrelevant to the people on the outside.

The message of the 'Gospel of the Church' is proclaimed when the church, as an institution, teaches its own distinctive but changeable methods as primary truths above unchanging biblical truths and principles. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for this very thing in Mark 7:8, "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding to the traditions of men. This contributes to doing people so that they conform a certain way of thinking. This pressure to conform can often be manipulative and controlling. The 'Gospel of the Church' tells us how to behave, what to wear, how to pray and how to speak. It is all about conforming - "if you want to join our church you must conform to these things" A good example of this gospel in action is found in the case of the Herero Tribe in Namibia. Their dress code was created by missionaries who thought they needed to dress more modestly, so they taught the tribes people to wear full Victorian gear, covered from head to toe in 40 degree Celsius heat. The missionaries taught this because their understanding of being a Christian included dressing in a certain way; the way the missionaries did in 19th Century Germany. Was this 'gospel' good news?

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind pharisee first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." **Matthew 23-25-26***

When a so-called gospel like this is preached it can suck the life out of the church, the leaders and the people - men, women and children alike. It is the very error that contributed to the Crusades against Muslims, the religious wars in Ireland, etc. This false gospel breaks down unity and increases division between Christian groups.

instead of releasing people to be themselves with an expression of God's character displaying their own flavour within their own cultural parameters. It also contributes to the creation of denominational church, a phenomenon that has existed through church history and which results in division, suspicion, criticism and competition.

In the 'Gospel of the Church, the church has become the pinnacle of the Kingdom This is error: although the church is part of the Kingdom, it is not all there is to experience about the Kingdom, and the Kingdom doesn't only exist in the church! In fact, Revelation 21 clearly states that in the new age, the church, as part of the old order of things, will no longer be. So church really is only a means to an end Kingdom encompasses much more than just the church with its methods, ways and habits.

The 'Gospel of the Church' breeds an institutionalised mindset in people. It is one of the key reasons why the world has rejected God: it has seen the institutionalised rigid and irrelevant church and has (rightly) thought: "if God is anything like the church, I want no part of Him!"

*"Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees you hypocrites! You shut the I heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, not will you let those enter who are trying to **Matthew 23:13-14***

We are to work together promoting Christ and His Kingdom, not our own church empires

Characteristics of this gospel

- Conformity
- Religious bondage
- No Kingdom unity
- Lack of freedom, power and life
- Religious bondage
- Rut
- Suspicion of others, suspect motives
- Manipulation and control
- Abuse of people and power
- Substitute Salvation with morality
- Competition and comparison
- Status and position
- Titles
- No servant leadership
- Tradition
- Jargon, form, dress, clichés etc.

The so-called 'Gospel of Salvation'

The Gospel of 'Salvation' focuses on getting people saved. It stems from a misunderstanding of the Kingdom picture that God revealed to us. John 10-0 that Jesus is the Door, which means that there must be something beyond the door. This something is the Kingdom "Come to Jesus" is the typical message of Salvation plains that people have proclaimed, not realising that salvation is only the door that leads to the Kingdom. It is sad when people spend their whole lives saved, but remain standing in the doorway; they have not realised that there is a whole room - the Kingdom- waiting to be explored. This has bred a 'Babylonian church' mentality. In the same way as the ancient nation of Babylon would go out from its city, conquer a nation and bring its captives back to Babylon, the Babylonian church puts on an outreach programme to see people 'saved, with the aim of dragging them back within the confines of its four walls, against their will and desire.

One can say that the message of Salvation is truth but it is only part of the truth meant to be understood in the overall context of the Kingdom. It is important to note that we are not in any way making light of the incredible gift of salvation. We need to remember that salvation is only the starting point of our Christian life that ushers us into the Kingdom. There is so much more to our faith than just salvation: Romans 8:29 states that God has not only predestined us to be saved but also to become conformed to the image of His Son, i.e. to become "perfect" -that Greek word "telios" fully grown, mature, complete, lacking nothing.

The 'Gospel of Salvation' does not teach the message of the Kingdom which is one of lordship, discipleship, sonship and maturity. This message has manifested itself in different ways in different nations:

In developing countries the salvation message contributes to people developing a dualistic worldview that can be summarised as:"Come to Jesus today and give your life to Him. He is preparing a mansion in the skies for you that you will be able to enjoy when you die. In the meantime, it does not matter if your life is hell!"This way of thinking has contributed to making Africa what it is today: a group of nations that are largely ' saved, but not discipled, and not displaying a mature Christianity. As a result, generations of people in Africa keep 'getting saved and giving their lives to Jesus, never moving on to maturity as Hebrews 6 exhorts us. They have not been successfully taught and shown how to solve their own issues; instead, the solution has often been provided for them in the form of charities, NGOs and charitable funds used to deliver ready-made infrastructures. As a result, African nations have, largely, not become responsible for their land and have not taken ownership of and dominion over it. Instead, the people have grown and developed an "assisted mentality", i.e., one prone to constantly have the work done for them. Such nations look to God for the salvation of their souls, but to the West for the transformation of their community.

In developed countries, like Europe and North America, the bad fruit of the 'Gospel or Salvation' manifests differently. A typical manifestation would be the "rich young ruler'

syndrome, already mentioned previously. Rich young rulers are people who consider themselves 'saved' and desperate to follow Jesus and religion, and yet they are not prepared to count the cost necessary to grow as a disciple of Christ. Jesus, according to Mark 10:24, explains that it is hard to enter the Kingdom of God since it requires sacrifice in terms of time, effort, wealth, relationships, etc. Without an understanding of Kingdom, the Christian life becomes self-centred; it's all about me, my happiness and desires. Unfortunately this breeds unfulfilment, boredom and frustration as church-attenders never experience Kingdom breakthrough and the abundant life spoken of by Jesus. Nowadays, in our western churches especially, we have many people with talent, skill, potential, etc., but who are not prepared to pay the price; they opt for a life of comfort instead. The 'Gospel of Salvation' has fostered the understanding that salvation is enough, resulting in the priesthood of the believer and body ministry never developing. This leads to the members of western churches being weak and immature with outreach efforts having no lasting impact on their community.

Characteristics of this gospel

- Form and methodology
- Never going beyond the door
- Lack of Lordship
- All about me, what can I get?
- God serves me and my desires
- Easily swayed by every wind of doctrine
- Weak churches/weak people
- Lack of maturity
- Little or no development of the priesthood of the believer
- Little equipping
- Little release
- Frustration
- Sermon tasting
- Rich young ruler mentality'
- Empire building
- Never grow up into all things
- Boredom -'there must be more than this!'
- Carry hurts for years in the church
- Maintenance mode rather than Kingdom breakthrough

Chapter 7

The Order of God

Godlessness in the end days

We live in a day where lawlessness and confusion abounds in many nations, There is a great need for godly order on the earth. As I write this, there are half a dozen serious conflicts taking place in different parts of the world where disorder reigns and communities suffer.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self control brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

1 Timothy 3: 1-5

There is a great need to see God's government established, not just within earthly systems but also in the body of Christ. God should be God in the midst of His people, the One who rules and reigns as Almighty Lord, not just as a God who satisfies our self-centred desires in a consumer society and humanistic world. The prosperity gospel encouraged a self-seeking movement in the modern church. God's plan for the church is that His people are free from ungodly, worldly ways of living and full of joy. God's plan is also that we influence the world and bring change to value systems, attitudes, priorities and materialistic mindsets to build and advance the Kingdom of God in our society.

Again, it is helpful to view the order of God as 'Top Down, Inside Out.

Top down

Postmodernism (truth is relative and not absolute; there are many truths that are valid but do not have to agree with one another; we are a sum of our experiences) and secular humanism (a rejection of the spiritual realm, God or supernatural beings, leaving human reason, ethics and philosophy as the basis for morality and decision making) are mindsets rife in our modern age. The influence of Eastern religions and humanistic self-improvement programmes have aided people in their copy of Adam's original sin of becoming like God. Many people today like to consider themselves 'spiritual, pick and mixing parts of ideologies and movements they like and discarding parts which are problematic or incompatible with their desires. There is a rejection of absolute truth, and morality and ethics are defined by what is best for the majority or just 'best for me. This mindset says I am my own god: I'll define who or what God is, if indeed I choose to believe in him. These mindset are defined firstly from self- or bottom up' government.

The Bible is clear: God's chosen form of government is a theocracy. God created the

universe, He is King and He is Sovereign over it. When God came to Earth, He was sent as a Son and appeared as Immanuel, God with us.

*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us), **Matthew 1:23***

God's Kingdom is a Top Down' Kingdom and as such, it is necessary for the church to accept His Lordship and His governmental order on Earth as it is in Heaven. As Christians understand that Kingdom comes from Him to me, and not the other way around, we can then reason from the whole to the part. The whole is the bigger picture perspective. The part is my life and its details important to me.

Embracing Top Down thinking is the realisation that seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness first (Matthew 6:33) enables us to fulfil His exciting plan for mankind as we put to one side living for selfish gain and for our own comfort.

Order in the church

The Word of God clearly defines what the Kingdom 'coming' in our lives will look like: it's a godly order, in our personal lives, our homes and families, and also for the church, bringing immature babes to mature adults.

*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. **Isaiah 9:6,7***

This foundational passage from the prophet Isaiah gives us profound insight to the workings of Kingdom:

- Jesus appears as a child but is given as a son - He grows up and sets a pattern for our Christian lives.
- The government of God rests on His shoulders- this government is the Kingdom of God His rule and reign, operating from the top down.

The Son is also called Eternal Father: as we grow in sonship we then father others into maturity.

- The moment mankind moves out of that godly order and casts aside away from the fear of God and a respect for Him and His Word, disorder takes over; people cast off restraint (Proverbs 29:18)

*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. **Judges 21:25***

Casting aside godly order, Israel in the time of the Judges rejected leadership and godly government. This is a pattern repeated through history and results in a prevailing

mindset that God should work for us instead of us working with God (Isaiah 59:9)

Jesus' intention for the order of the church is that its government (leadership) would lead, guide, encourage and rule the body in love and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Leaders should reflect the heart of Father God to the people and lead decisively with grace and vision. The church should be free from democracies, dictators, manipulate, controlling influences and those who have a motive to exercise their own gifts or ministry from selfish motives with no accountability or responsibility towards the family of God.

Delegated authority

*... and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in **Ephesians 1:19-23***

There is no authority but God's, given to Jesus. When we, as part of His church, minister under God's authority it should be for the same purposes, with Christ's attitude, only using the authority as God would use it. This is the reason why authority should be exercised in plurality of eldership in the presence of fellow elders or leaders and in proper godly accountability. For more on this see 'Biblical Eldership' or 'Eldership Equipping' resources.

The increase of His government

The Lord says that His government will increase with no limit.

*Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. **Isaiah 9:7***

How does this happen? The Kingdom of God increases with every life that is rescued from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light (Colossians 1:13). His government increases when we submit to God and allow Him to rule over every area of our lives. His government increases as we raise up leaders who advance the Kingdom of God and exercise divine authority over powers of darkness.

From a leadership perspective, the responsibility of this godly government is the implementation of Kingdom values, ethos and principles. The government is also responsible for the protection of these values, principles and ethos, and is to Overthrow and drive out all foreign and ungodly values, principles and ethos.

Inside out

God's intention is that His Kingdom order and the increase of His government should be effected by His people the Church. In John 14:23 God makes a promise that He will make His home in us and Paul encourages us in 1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit? It is God's Spirit living inside us that brings internal change.

The command to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12) means that, although the work of Jesus saves us for eternity, we take responsibility to continually be filled with Holy Spirit and allow Him to continue His sanctifying work in our lives. The sanctification of the Holy Spirit results in God's Kingdom order being brought into every area of our lives while here on Earth. The word of God is very clear that He is a jealous God who will not relent "until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). We may not reach perfection until His second coming, but we can reach maturity.

Ezekiel 36:26 makes comment on the need for the Holy Spirit to change us from the inside out, writing His Law on our hearts, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh"

The Bible details the scope of godly order: it is to impact every area of a human life; thought life, desires, intentions and motives, finances, business dealings, relationships, marriage, child rearing, physical health, employment. The list is endless and the work of Kingdom order coming in our lives operates throughout our entire lifetime. The change comes on our inside first and is perceptible on the outside as a 'fruit' that is visible to the world.

*Thus you will recognise them by their fruits. **Matthew 7:20***

Our transformation is 'inside-out'; it starts on the inside and becomes evident on the outside. This revealing of Christ in us is what Jesus said would transform the world.

*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. **Matthew 5:14-16***

This is an inner transformation that manifests in good deeds, an overflow of a yielded heart. God looks at the heart attitude and is pleased by a humble and contrite spirit (Isiah 66:2). He is pleased by what we are becoming and not what we do for Him. Our good deeds should be motivated by the response of beloved children to a loving Father and not for His approval or to gain His attention or favour. It is this transformed people that bring hope and reflect a good God to a very broken world.

*For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. **(Romans 8:19)***

The world is desperate for authentic, changed lives of living faith, displayed by mature sons of God who have been transformed from the inside out and display the associated good fruit.

The Law as the order of God

In Matthew 22:35 a Jewish lawyer asks Jesus which is the greatest commandment in the law. Jesus answers with quotes from Deuteronomy and Leviticus: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5); and "You shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18). These two commandments are closely linked and perfectly describe the correct order of God's Kingdom in our lives. Fundamentally we must place Jesus as Lord and King over our lives, but not out of unhealthy fear or religious duty- the heart motive must be love. The second part is having the same healthy respect for the person living alongside us (our neighbour) as we do for our own lives. In other words, "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you" (Luke 6:31). The implication of the verses in Leviticus 19:18 and Luke 6:31 is that we also must have a healthy opinion and respect for ourselves - no self-hatred or putting ourselves down.

The Ten Commandments found in Exodus chapter 20 are an expansion of the 'greatest commandment' and they also display the order of God.

1 "You shall have no other gods before Me" Our lives only work when Jesus is Lord and King of our lives.

2 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. We are not to give our love and attention to any vain thing that could become more important than God - - careers, relationships, wealth, material possessions, Our independence, etc.

3 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." We are to remember the healthy respect appropriate for such a powerful, living creator.

4 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, you your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." Slaves do not receive a day off; Father God has set a rest day every seventh day and as a blessing to our lives. Taking a day off each

week honours God and confirms that we are sons and not slaves. Building a weekly rhythm with a Sabbath rest obeys the order of God.

5 "Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you" Children recognising parental authority and taking care of their parents is vital to correct working of society with strong, healthy and functional family units.

6 "You shall not murder." Murder and violence are particularly destructive to God's order in society.

7 "You shall not commit adultery" Breaking of the marriage covenant brings destruction and disorder to everyone within a family. Society is weakened as a result.

8 You shall not steal" Theft also destroys community relationships and God's

9 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour" Slander, gossip and two faced speech destroy community.

10 "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbour" Placing our own needs above others, lacking contentment with our lot in Life, and fostering jealousy of what others own destroys relationship and community.

As Christians we often get bogged down with the seemingly irrelevant details of the Law given to the children of Israel in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. What has mixing fabrics in clothing, reaping to the edges of your field, trimming your beard, or getting tattoos got to do with life today? They were all connected with God's order for Israel at that time and the associated principles behind each law can be traced back to the greatest commandment stated by Jesus.

As the order of God is established in our lives, the world perceives it as maturity. We then have much to offer the dysfunctional, hurting communities around us.

Salvation as the order of God

The word salvation in the Greek is soteria and can mean, according to Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words: material and temporal deliverance from danger and apprehension; the spiritual and eternal deliverance granted immediately by God to those who accept His conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus; the present experience of God's power to deliver from the bondage of sin; the future deliverance of believers at the Parousia of Christ for His saints; all the blessings bestowed by God in men in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

When Zaccheus responded to Jesus' decision to stay at his house with a life-changing declaration that "half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded on men

anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much" (Luke 19:8), it is obvious the order of God had come to this dishonest man's life. Jesus immediately proclaimed "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9)

Salvation is a vital starting point in the ordering of our lives under God's rule and rein.

Healing as the order of God

There are a number of Greek words that denote healing in the bible with the following meanings; made whole; physical treatment; to save (saving from disease and its effects); health. We often consider doctors and nurses as healing their patients but the truth is that medical staff use their training and skill to allow the natural healing process in our bodies to operate effectively. When we consider the miraculous ways in which the body repairs itself, we wonder at the brilliance and skill of Creator God, the Great Physician. And what is healing but the bringing back of our lives into line with the order of God?

The vast majority of the time this reordering takes place without us noticing it or seeing it take place. Occasionally we need a Divine intervention, or miracle, to make our lives work properly again, be it spiritual, emotional, mental and physical healing. In Mark 5:25 a woman had suffered bleeding for 12 years.

One of the consequences of this for a female Jew was that it made her ritually unclean. As a result, the lady lacked order physically and spiritually, and I am sure emotionally and mentally. When Jesus healed her with the words, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction." (Mark 5:34), the instant bringing of God's order to her life was life-changing.

So, when we are praying for someone to be healed, we are praying for their bodies to return to the order of God.

Chapter 8

Binary Truth

To fully understand the Kingdom of God, we must understand the logic system of God revealed in His word. This logic can be termed 'Binary Truth'

Understanding Binary Truth

You will have heard it said that the Bible is full of contradictions! Some apparent contradictions occur when the reader simply misunderstands the meaning or context of a single scripture. Other 'contradictions' occur when God reveals an aspect or dimension of His nature by painting a picture using contrasting concepts. We can call these 'Binary Truths, when two truths about God that combine to reveal one manifold truth. Holding both truths in tension, the two together release the power of that specific blessing or truth. The power or blessing cannot be released unless both truths are understood and put into action. To put it simply, binary truth means that one plus one equals one!

You may know the strong compound glue 'epoxy resin'. It consists of two tubes of liquid. Apart, the individual liquids are ineffective and of no use but when combined formed a strong adhesive. The same principle applies to binary truth.

Within church, error occurs when one of the parts of a binary truth is taught and emphasised without the other. Both aspects of a binary truth embraced together give the full balanced picture which, when applied, brings freedom to the believer. The truths in the Bible need to be taught accurately and completely, so that God's people can be free (John 8:31,32).

It is important to note that these truths may carry opposing qualities but they are not to be seen as opposite or in any way dualistic.

Some examples from the Bible:

The Lion and The Lamb

Jesus is described as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and as the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world (Revelation 5:5; John 1:29). We must understand these truths together in their entirety. Jesus came to the earth as a babe, helpless and vulnerable. He grew in maturity and, through His humility and sacrifice, is saviour of the world. But we must not be mistaken. When Jesus returns He will no longer be 'gentle' Jesus meek and mild, the Lamb who emptied Himself of His divine glory and privilege. He will be the Lion of the tribe of Judah, whose roaring voice will be like peals of thunder, from whose mouth will come a sword and who will judge the nations.

Willing and Obedient

"If you are willing and obedient you will eat the fat of the land" Isaiah 1:19 (NIV)

The verse neither says if we are willing we will eat the fat of the land, nor if we are simply obedient. We need to have both willingness and obedience. Willingness refers to the attitude of our heart; obedience deals with our actions, not only doing God's will and work, but doing it His way. The two truths combine powerfully to produce blessing.

Jesus - Author and Finisher of our faith

Jesus is the Author and the Finisher/Perfecter of our Faith (Hebrews 12:2). He cannot be to us just the author, i.e. we accept Him as Saviour and then live the rest of our lives doing our own thing our own way. Neither can we be perfected by Him, without first allowing Him to be our Saviour.

The Alpha and The Omega

In Revelation 1:8, Jesus announces He is the Alpha and the Omega - the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet (like a to z for us). By this he reveals the nature of God: that He is before all things and after all things. He is behind and before. He is not just the initiator of all things but also has finished everything even before it is begun. Greek thought refers to time as linear and stretching out in front of us, a space as yet unknown, and it would be in this space that God and the events of the world and of our lives unfold before us. But the Hebrew understanding of God is the correct one, that God inhabits all of time, He is eternal and infinite and has the end of all things in His hands, even before it began.

Examples of Binary Truths for further study

Binary Truths in scripture	Reference
The Law and the prophets	Luke 16:16
Jesus was anointed with Spirit and Power	Acts 10:38
Grace and mercy	Hebrews 4:16
Lord and King	1 Timothy 6:15 Revelations 17:14
Worship and Serve	Matthew 4:10
Rock and Salvation	Psalms 62:2,6
Sin and death	Romans 8:1-2
Life and death the power of the tongue	Proverbs 18:21

From these few simple examples we can see the importance of understanding binary truths. How many churches emphasise one and not the other? Many preach, pray and strive to see victory but never achieve breakthrough. Over emphasis on things like "binding and loosing, 'casting out demons, 'running new programmes, prayer and fasting, on their own, will never bring the peace and order God's people are promised. **42**

Matthew 7:21-23)-This can only come when the church has the maturity to apply the whole truth of God's infallible word. (NIV)

Binary Truth and the Kingdom

What is the Kingdom? We have already mentioned that the original Greek the word for Kingdom is *Basilia* it describes the domain over which the king sovereign The reach to which a king's domain extends, there will be His rule and reign In a true kingdom, the king declares the Law; there is no voting and his word is absolute As citizens of God's Kingdom we must reason from the place of understanding that:

The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it
Psalm 24:1

For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
Isaiah 11:9

These verses indicate the extent of God's reign.

The perfect Eden presented in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 enjoyed the perfect rule and reign of God. Adam and Eve enjoyed a close friendship with their heavenly Father and His rule, while Creation enjoyed the stewardship of mankind's rule. Chapter 3 shows the destruction resulting from Adam's rebellion when he rejected God's rule over his life. Disorder, loss of identity, shame, guilt and death entered at one stupid evil stroke. Father God immediately announces His plan to bring forgiveness and the restoration of godly order (the restoration of His Kingdom) to mankind in Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." The devil, represented here by the serpent, usurped God's authority from the beginning and has been at war with mankind ever since. We follow Father God's plan through the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 12 to create the nation of Israel to represent the character and will of God on the earth until Messiah is born from one of the 12 tribes the tribe of Judah.

No wonder that as soon as Jesus is released into His public ministry by His loving Father with the words "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased, Jesus proclaims the restoration and coming of the Kingdom of God to all mankind. Shivers run down my spine when I read the words of Jesus in John 10:10 in the context of Kingdom, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy: I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. The authority that was deceitfully and destructively taken from Adam, bringing disorder, loss of identity, shame, guilt and death, has been taken back by the King of the Kingdom, the only man worthy enough, righteous enough and powerful enough to accomplish such an impossible task- Jesus Christ Son of God, Prince of Life and King of Kings. The extent of the Kingdom of God is not a physical, geographical region, it exists wherever a person welcomes Jesus as Lord and Saviour. If the rule and reign of God operates in a person's life the Kingdom of God has come. One day all of creation will be restored fully under the reign of the King with no

devil, no evil, no pain, no rebellious humans we await that day for the second coming of Christ. Until then we have a job to do and a Kingdom to proclaim. The Kingdom of God is within you" Luke 17:21

*The kingdom of God is within you **Luke 17:21***

We can see from God's clear plan and strategy running from Genesis in the old Testament through to the New Testament gospels and ending at Revelation that the Gospel of the Kingdom is the Good News of the rule and reign of the King.

The rule and reign of God has multiple facets and practical ways of outpouring that we will explore in this chapter. Most of these take the form of binary truths. When we understand and hold each pair of truths in healthy tension, we understand Kingdom

God as Father and King

God is our King (Psalm 95:3). He is also our Father (Matthew 6v9)

Focusing on only one part of this binary truth leads to error or an incorrect view of God

If God is preached only as King this creates the impression of an aloof distant, unapproachable God, whom we can never know. It separates an intimate God from His people. Many people have the mental picture of God as an old man with a white beard, out of touch with reality or what is going on in the earth. Others see God as a strict dictator, always angry and who is looking for wrongdoers to punish.

Conversely, if we only focus on God being a Father, we can preach a fluffy gospel. He can be viewed as a "Father Christmas" God, whom we only approach when we have a list of needs. Or, He can be viewed as a grandfather God who laughs and has fun with His children but never challenges or disciplines.

Both statements are true: on the one hand God is King of the Universe, Creator, and the King over His domain, an all-consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28). He is also revealed through Jesus as Father. When Jesus taught us how to pray in Mat 6v9, He said we should address this all-powerful God as Father. When the true pictures of God are held in tension, our relationship with God will be healthy. We are not just His subjects but also His children. We are to approach Him reverently as the author of life but we can also be intimate with Him, as a loving 'dad' Jesus could have given us a thousand different words to address God, but He chose Father, a word that defines relationship with Him

The Family and the Army of God

In God's Kingdom there is both the Family of God and the Army of God. At first this appears contradictory and impossible; there seems little overlap between a harsh militaristic, Spartan boot camp, and a cosy, safe loving, nurturing home. As His people there are times as family, enjoying support, nurture, loving friendships and a safe home. There are also times to rise up and fight there is a job to be done lives to be won, and soldiers to be trained and mobilised. We are to walk as both family and army simultaneously - a binary truth.

Flowing from our knowledge of God as Father, we have the realisation of being a part of the family of God. This speaks of community, relationship and intimacy. It is in the family of God where we care for the Body of Christ. We are His children and His heart is tender towards us as a Father's heart is towards his children.

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. **Ephesians 2:19***

We are a part of God's household, His family. This truth has been diluted in the church today. Family has been substituted for structures; either a one-man show, a minister with his congregation, or a business type of model with boards, directors and a CEO. This dilutes the reality and power of family from the church.

When we are subjects of a kingdom with a king in charge, we can be called into his army to fight his battles. With Jesus as our commander, we are also part of His army. As we embrace God as King we gain an understanding of being part of the Army of God. We are under His authority; He is Lord, commander in chief. We also represent Him and carry His authority in His Kingdom.

When we as a leadership go away together for a planning weekend, we always start as family. We eat together, chat, laugh, tell stories and usually end up enjoying each other's company. The next morning when we meet to discuss plans and strategy for church and the Kingdom, everyone shifts into army mode. We put aside personal plans and agendas and focus on the exciting opportunities God has presented us to extend His rule and reign.

Nurture and government

The story of God providing the ram in the thicket for Abraham is well known (see Genesis 22). Abraham is the first man to call God by His name Jehovah Jirah 'the Lord will provide', which literally means "Jehovah will see to it"! To nurture, provide and care for is part of the very character of God. He will not and cannot neglect His people. Throughout the Old Testament we see God responding to His people when they reach out to Him in time of need and distress. In our lack, Jesus shall supply according to His riches. It is part of God's character to care and nurture.

The love that God has for us is an agapao love, a love that is sacrificial, all giving and unconditional. Too many times this love is portrayed as weak and sloppy. It is not. This love endured the shame, sin, disease and scorn of the cross. This love is foundational to the way God brings kingly government.

*Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. **Isaiah 9:7a***

Our God is a God of order. Government is just as much part of His character as His love and nurture. There is no chaos in His realm. He brings order out of chaos. His people are conformed to the image of Christ as He brings order to their lives. God's word has been given to us not just for teaching and training in righteousness, but for correction and reproof as well (2 Timothy 3:16). The two corrective words, correction and reproof,

show us that God brings His government, His rule and His reign and order into lives as part of His love.

Being nurtured is part of belonging to the family of God. It speaks of those older in the faith feeding raising and releasing the younger generation, tending them as God our Father does.

Being part of God's army means a different but important way of relating to one another and to God's government. Government speaks of boundaries, authority: loving limits. When we relate to God as part of His army we respond to Him as Lord whose word is to be obeyed instantly, and whose cause is our cause. The battle cry of those in the Kingdom of God is for the King and the Kingdom. It comprises the passionate and the mature, for whom no personal cost is too high in seeing God's Kingdom established.

As with all binary truths, to focus on one side of the truth, to the exclusion of the other, leads to error. Focusing on government leads to overbearing leaders who produce immature followers doing work out of duty or fear, receiving correction in their lives without protection and legitimacy that community relationships bring. Focusing on nurture while neglecting government produces people who are self-focused, Rather than God's love being focused outwardly to the community, it is focused inwardly, towards our personal happiness. In its extreme form this results in leaders doing anything to keep church members happy, even if that means compromising the shepherd. God's standards. Personal wholeness and growth becomes the end in itself and not the means to bring Kingdom order to the lives of others.

It is interesting that an over emphasis of either truth results in immaturity. We have worked with churches where the expectation of the members is to attend and do as they are told, even to the point of where they should live or work. This is basic error as the function of leaders is to provide godly boundaries and rule over the people, not to overrule their decisions. We have also come into contact with church leaders who dilute biblical standards to 'keep people in the church. One leadership even stopped telling their young adults it was immoral to have sex before marriage. When asked why the leader said, 'we don't want them to leave

The Prophetic and the Apostolic

Prophecy brings Exhortation, edification and comfort to Gods people (1Corinthians 14). Prophecy is the voice of the Father. It comes out of the nurturing of God's character. When the apostle Paul speaks to the Corinthians about prophecy he instructs them that those who prophecy edify the Church. Edification means to build up and confirm as a strong family.

Apostolic means to be sent out, from the original Greek Apostolos which literally means one sent forth" it specifically means to be an ambassador of the Gospel, which is a governmental role, in line with the army of God. Furthermore, part of the apostolic gifting carries the ability of "master builder"(in Greek- Architeknon, 1 Corinthians 3:10).

This involves, among other functions, the strategic breaking of new ground and moving the Kingdom forward while maintaining godly order within the church.

Ephesians 2:20 refers to the church "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone"

The foundation of the Church is not supposed to be as we see in most churches today, built on the gift of the teacher and the pastor. It should be built on the apostle and the prophet, being sent out and declaring the voice of the Father. Unless the church is built in this way, with Jesus as the cornerstone, we will build weak churches that struggle to break new ground and fail to develop strategies of how to reach their communities.

The Shepherd and the Bishop

For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2:25

In the time of Jesus, sheep would not be driven from behind as they are now; they were led by the shepherd who walked ahead. The sheep would follow their shepherd's voice. If a lamb continually strayed from the flock, the shepherd would take the lamb and break its leg. The shepherd would then splint the leg, bind it and carry the lamb until its leg healed. From that moment onward the lamb would not leave the side of the shepherd.

As God's people, referred to by Jesus as His sheep (John 10:11-15), we need to understand that Jesus is both our Shepherd and our Overseer (Bishop, Guardian). In 1 Peter 4:5 Jesus is described as the Chief Shepherd (Archipöimēn in the original Greek, meaning head or chief shepherd) and we are His sheep. It is the role of the shepherd to lead, nurture and protect.

The role of the earthly overseer (church leaders) is to set loving boundaries. If this relationship operates incorrectly, it can lead to manipulation or domination. As leaders, if we lead purely as a bishop (overseer), we will dominate the people and their needs will not be met. If we lead purely as a shepherd the people will tend to lack order because there are few or no boundaries.

One of the most common problems we come across in churches where the leaders emphasise the shepherding function is gossip. There is so much 'caring for the flock' without setting boundaries about what is said to and about others, that the people are hurt by destructive speech.

The rod and the staff

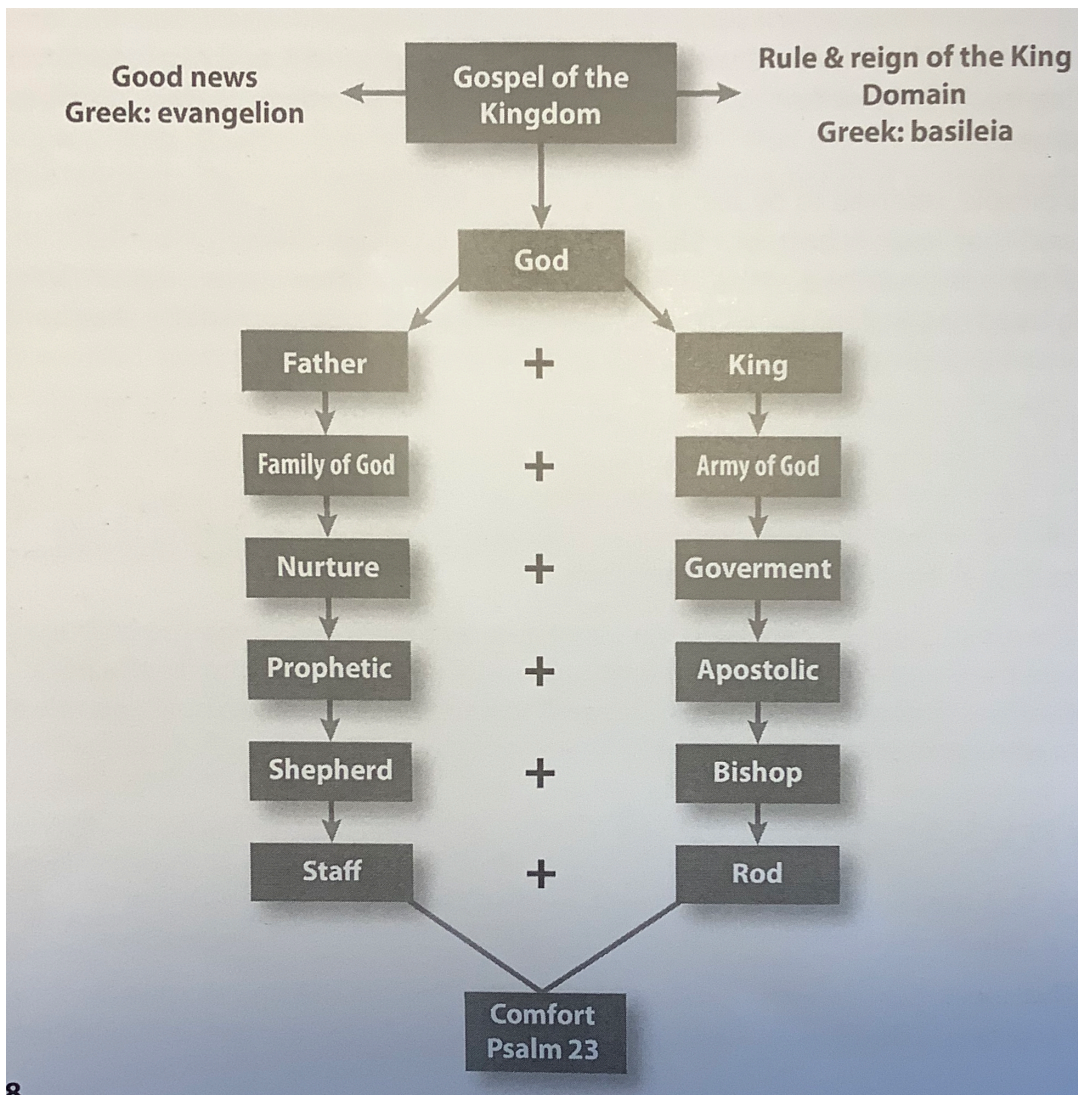
We know that the shepherd would protect, lead and nurture, as well as bring discipline. What were the tools of the shepherd? They were his rod and his staff. The staff represents the shepherding side of God's character, the way that He nurtures, feeds and protects. The rod represents the bishop, God's correction and discipline in our lives.

The passage in Hebrews 12:5-11 illustrates that we have a choice as God's e.. (generic use of the term) to accept and respond to the discipline of the Father. We see in verse 5 that the Lord disciplines those He loves. Furthermore, in verse 8 it speaks about the discipline that we endure as sons. There is no son that is legitimate in their heart that has not endured discipline. In fact, those that the father does not discipline are illegitimate.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4b

In Church today there are many people who do not experience comfort. This does not mean that they are comfortable, but rather that order, righteousness and peace is not brought to their souls. We see from this scripture that it is the rod and the staff together that comfort; two truths, not one.

Leaders have to walk in a full understanding of binary truth and live them out if people under our care are to live in Godly comfort. As God's people, whether leaders or not, it is our responsibility to walk in these principles; able to nurture and govern, shepherd and bishop, and to use and receive both the rod and the staff.



Chapter 9

The Gospel of the Kingdom at work

Historically, the Christian church has formed a distinct sacred-secular divide, teaching that the spiritual things of life are to be pursued, such as prayer, Bible study, self-denial, giving to the poor, and attending Church services; and secular things of life, such as material possessions, Jobs, theatre, dance, cinema, sport, art, and finance are very much second rate and rather get in the way of our Christian lives. We might say, "I have left my secular job and now work 'full-time for the church", or "I'm not as spiritual as my wife - she prays and has dreams". I have heard church members say, "I am glad when the coffee and chat bit of the meeting is over and we get into the spiritual part" Christian hymns came to be considered as sacred songs - the sort of songs we must sing when worshipping 'in church. Modern songs of the time were often considered worldly and secular, even though when hymns were originally written, the composers often used modern tunes to make it easy for common folk to learn.

There is a prevailing view that what goes on inside the four walls of a church building is spiritual and what happens outside is secular. This view has much more to do with Ancient Greek philosophy rather than biblical Christianity and the Kingdom of God. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the Kingdom of God is expansive and exists wherever the will of God is accomplished in people's lives. It is certainly not confined to the four walls of a building incorrectly called a church. For more discussion of the Ancient Greek mindset, read the Jubilee resource booklet, 'Understanding Greek and Hebrew Thought.

The seven spheres of society

When forming a strategy for Kingdom impact upon our local community, we as a Jubilee leadership have found it useful to consider society in terms of seven distinct areas. Many Christians have already considered society in similar ways including Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade; Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With a Mission; and Francis Schaeffer, the American Evangelical Theologian. The consideration is that if we are to impact any nation for Jesus Christ, then we would have to affect the seven spheres of society that are the pillars of any society.

These seven spheres or mountains can be separated into

- government
- the Arts
- education
- religion
- family
- business
- Media

It is worth noting that, in every age of society since Christ, Christians have made major advances in all of these spheres. Western law looked to the Bible for a foundation morality and justice; the United Kingdom Monarch is presented with a bible at his/her coronation with the words, "We present you with this Book, the most valuable thing this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God"; the Parish church system with its huge construction programme of church buildings in every town and village established after French Norman rule of England provided communities with a centre for community, entertainment, and collective worship; the Christian church is responsible for the setting up of schools and hospitals and orphanages all over the world; science accomplished major advances from the 1600s because of the biblical worldview that God is a God of order.

Since Jesus, the King of His Kingdom, created society, each sphere should glorify God and reflect His character and His order. The Kingdom of God is able to touch and inform each of these areas bringing God's healing order and not man's humanistic destruction.

Examples of Kingdom order

We have seen powerful examples of this on a large scale. In the religious sphere, the Reformation under Martin Luther was a bringing of the church back in line with the order of God. The Roman Catholic Church had been corrupt and morally weak, and the nations wanted a change. God used Martin Luther to challenge the immoral practices used to manipulate the Christian population and extort money by the sale of indulgences. After attempts at reforming (re-ordering) the Roman Catholic Church came to an end, new churches formed and the Protestant church was born, allowing Kingdom rule to flourish once again.

When Christians George and Richard Cadbury began building at Bournville in 1895 they did so, not as an attempt to solve all Birmingham's social problems, but to provide good quality housing in a natural, green environment. He challenged the thinking of the day and sought to bring Kingdom thinking by practical example. It was the creation of the world's first planned and balanced community reflecting the order of God. The expansion of industry in Victorian England leading to an increase in employment in the cities, resulting in a poor standard of living in urban slums. The objective was the building of decent quality homes at prices within the reach of industrial workers. All the houses were to consist of light airy rooms and have good sanitation. Some accommodation was specifically built for rent for those who could not afford to buy their own homes. The Bournville Village Trust was set up to ensure the planned development and maintenance of the Estate and to preserve it for future generations leaving a legacy that is still active today.

Henry J Heinz was a devout Methodist. At the beginning of his will he wrote: "I do hereby set forth, at the very beginning of this Will, as the most important item in it, a Confession of my faith in Jesus Christ as my Saviour" Henry's business Ideals and

Principles, almost unheard of at the time, remain progressive to this day, conducting Business based on the simple idea that every profit should be fairly earned. One of his mottos still guides Heinz's purchasing practices today: "Deal with the seller so justly that he will want to sell to you again." He also followed the maxim, "Always remember to place yourself in the other person's shoes." He hated waste of any kind, inspiring each of his employees to avoid even the slightest waste of material, time or opportunity. Kingdom values of quality, integrity, consumer first, ownership and innovation ran throughout the company guided with the vision: "To be the best food company, growing a better world" In addition to its global success and longevity, the company was noted for fair treatment of workers and for pioneering safe and sanitary food preparation. Heinz provided his employees with free medical care, recreation facilities such as gyms, swimming pools, and gardens; and educational opportunities such as libraries, free concerts, and lectures. Henry J Heinz employed Kingdom principles bringing God's order in the business realm.

When we as Christians are bounded by a limited mindset of what church and salvation should be, our effectiveness and relevance to the world is also limited. As we realise the enormity of the vision and scope of God's Kingdom across the spheres of society, we can respond and work strategically under the will of the King.

The curse of the full-time Christian

Often when we support church leadership teams in their aim to impact their local communities, we come across a mindset that works against Kingdom influence across the spheres of society - the mindset of working 'full-time' for the church.

Much of the equipping and teaching undertaken by churches today is to prepare the church body to serve in the church: as worship leader, small group leader, administrator, preacher, counsellor, Bible study leader, etc. Many Christians pursue the ultimate pinnacle in any church-goer's life - to work 'full-time' in Christian ministry. This is not a biblical way of thinking and works against the Kingdom of God, building instead the empire of church.

I was struck by the story of a Korean Christian who had suppressed the call of God on his life to enter politics because all of the church equipping he received led him towards taking a 'full-time' role in church leadership. He later realised this and repented before God. With his connections and stature, he could have become a member of the Korean government, bringing Kingdom influence into major decisions that affected an entire nation.

How many men and women in our churches are not engaging with one of the spheres of Society because we as church leaders are not equipping them for life? We should be at the forefront in the development of business leaders, government officials, Musicians, song writers, emergency aid workers, educators, parents, and media communicators - all using their gifts, skills and abilities to extend God's Kingdom rule within the spheres of society, bringing God's order and blessing

A modern practical example of Kingdom outworked in today's church

How does Kingdom look in a modern practical church example? In our church we operate governmentally under a team of elders, appointed as eldership couples with their wives, with a set man as the 'first among equals!'. The vision given to the leaders from God is shared with the Jubilee body who are equipped to minister as God calls and enables. As we understand that every sphere of society should come under the influence and order of God and His Kingdom, we have pioneered and established the following works and ministries, all teaching biblical principles:

Training Discipleship Leadership training Eldership training
Cell leaders training
Mentoring
Men's group
Woman mentoring
Meet the living well family
Entrepreneurs development Business development
Churches together in the city, Churches together town
Mums and separation
Mums and tots
Alpha
Coffee shop
Marriage enrich
Community cafe
Open the book school outreach
Media printing web design
Book making
Mission UK, Mission international, Orphanage, Clinics, Surgeons

Local government forum assisting Christians to engage with politics;
Family Life Centre offering help and support to parents, married couples, children, teenagers, those struggling with divorce, bereaved, those facing debt or financial problems;

Multiple teams of leaders equipped to help churches engage with their Vision purpose and community

Two vital Kingdom principles

Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has become tasteless, can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything out and trampled under foot by men" Mature sons of the Kingdom are supposed to demonstrate the spice of life - the very thing that makes life worth living

representation of God is lacking life and is tasteless, the church becomes irrelevant, the world becomes anaesthetised to our message, and we enter a 'post-Christian' society. There are a number of Kingdom principles necessary for us to grasp so that church can flourish and we can be genuine salt and light to the world.

Principle 1 Unless other churches are succeeding, we are failing

Competition between churches and negativity voiced by a person from one church against another church is destructive to the Kingdom and the world turns away. I am shocked at the way church leaders even talk negatively about other leaders within their own denomination. Viewing Christians as one church in our city, town or village and maintaining a heart to support and bless other churches where possible, fosters an essential unity within our locality and honours Christ. A number of years ago when we had to leave our rented church building due to a new housing development, another church from an unrelated denomination gave us a building they no longer had use for. The building was completely paid off. What a blessing and what a message it sends: Kingdom.

Principle 2 No strings attached

When we read about Jesus' ministry and life, everything He did was commanded by Father God and motivated by love and compassion. Never did Jesus offer help on the basis that the recipient had to hear His message or attend a religious meeting. How many times do we as Christians only offer help if there is a chance to 'proclaim our message, or 'get people saved'? The main problem with this 'strings attached' approach is that we fail to keep our motives godly and pure. How many times have we pursued someone with friendship to win them for Christ' to find they do not show interest and then we drop them like a stone. What do you think this communicates to the person? It is the same when we offer help to the community with the motive of proclaiming the gospel. The motive is misplaced and local residents or council members smell it a mile off. It often takes time to win the trust and respect of local town leaders, proving our true motives in our faithfulness and actions. Start by asking how we can help them.

The initial opening into the community for us as a church was a local school with a bible reading drama with folks from other churches. We are involved with Easter and Christmas events.

We have found that councils and local government are not 'anti-Christian, but they are wary of organisations that push a hidden agenda beneath the offer of community help. Perhaps we Christians have ground to regain in this respect.

Community influence across the seven spheres

We run events through our leaders that connect us to art, toastmaster, suicide help lines, business networks, local and national politicians and non profit organisations.

We are running a talent show that invites talents outside of the churches. Social and play events that are all inclusive of culture and ethnic groups.

A final thought. Who extends God's Kingdom - God or us?

Recently I was drawn to stories of the D-Day landings of the Second World War June 1944. The British mindset under the hero Montgomery (Monty) was cautious and careful, demonstrated in the delay of the British troops taking the French city of Caen to its virtual destruction. The advance of the Americans, however, under General Patton, was carried out in a more adventurous manner as Patton favoured speed and aggression.

Adoption of a Kingdom way of thinking is to seek the orders of our commander in chief, Jesus Christ, and implement the instructions without delay according to godly wisdom and godly order. His is the Kingdom, the power and the glory but the Lord Jesus extends His Kingdom by the raising up and sowing of mature sons and daughters who display His Kingdom order in their lives. "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace" (Isaiah 9:7) as He passionately extends His Kingdom.

Are we speedily and aggressively involved in the extension of His Kingdom? Or are we cautiously and carefully delaying His plans?

*"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force." **Matthew 11:12***

Matthew Henry comments that The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence is like "the violence of an army taking a city by storm, or of a crowd bursting into a house, so the violent take it by force"

One day Jesus will come again and the Kingdom will be fully restored.

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever Revelation 11:15

Until then, let us pray and obey 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' without delay.

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