
THERE'S GOT TO BE MORE

Rediscovering
the Kingdom



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DEREK BROWN

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Inspire Publishing

Published in Australia in 2013

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inspire
PUBLISHING.COM



www.inspirepublishing.com

ISBN 978-0-9871739-1-1

*To my darling daughter Samantha, who inspires
me with her passion for the Kingdom and her
desire to make a difference in her world.*

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Endorsements

As a young adult seeking God's purpose and plan for my life, *There's Got To Be More* spoke directly to the core of those yearnings. These days we're given so many ideas by so many different sources, and it's easy to lose hold of the reason we're here in the midst of that. *There's Got To Be More* is straightforward, succinct and challenging, and encouraged me to step out into the freedom of where it is God's calling me, not where any religious ideal tries to place us.

My heart was stirred and my vision ignited as I read through this book, as if God was reminding me that my passions are given to me for His Kingdom's purposes and not to be afraid to use them for His glory. This book is a powerful tool for any young person striving to find God's will for their own lives and will encourage them to fully explore how it is we're called to further His Kingdom while on earth. Both freeing and challenging, *There's Got To Be More* is a book I know I'll return to throughout my own journey.

Danielle Hopping
University student studying Film and Movies

I found *There's Got To Be More* an educational and inspiring book on the topic of the Kingdom of God. Educational because it was theologically sound and meaty, cutting straight to the heart of the subject matter at hand. Inspiring because it is full of real-life examples of what happens when that theology is applied – God's Kingdom coming on earth!

Melissa Parenty
Missionary in southern France

This is a refreshing new book on the relationship between Kingdom of God and our vocation as an engineer, baker, florist, banker, etc. It helps us to connect our work with our Christian belief system. I am especially pleased that Derek had written this book primarily for the young adults. It is time now for the younger generation to once again be the salt and light of this

world through the work that they are doing now. I believe many will develop a strong passion for their work after reading this book.

James Teo
Business owner, Singapore

There's Got to Be More has the ability to make individual lives and purposes come alive, and is such an important and current read. It highlights the massive need for the acknowledgement of the Kingdom of God in the church, but also our everyday lives. Derek Brown has done an amazing job amalgamating his own and others' thoughts and revelations about bringing Heaven on Earth and making it real, achievable but ultimately integral.

Olivia Burnett
Product Manager for a film distribution company

Derek Brown's exploration on the Kingdom of God through scripture was inspirational and thought provoking. Our innate desire to discover and know what our Father in Heaven has created and purposed us for on earth is more than our Monday to Sunday routines. Doing the will of God in our careers, declaring his holiness and sovereignty, becomes much more powerful with knowledge and understanding of the Kingdom in our hearts.

By engaging deeper into God's word and using the substance of Derek's book, you'll be sent on a journey discovering the beauty and deliberate calling God has for all of his children, bringing meaning and purpose to your activities in church and the community, relationships with family and friends, and especially in your work and business life. Derek certainly writes a book that connects the dots. Practice Kingdom and unlock the fruitfulness of God's gifts in your life.

Iona Nkemfack
Small business owner

FOREWORD

Since meeting Derek Brown at a guest house in Manila, Philippines, we have been walking on a journey together as friends and as partners working together to advance the Kingdom of God.

I have had the privilege of travelling globally for the last thirty years. In recent years I have heard more and more people say ‘there has to be more’ to church and/or to the Christian life. And indeed there is more. But we live in a moment of discontent among many Christians for that something more.

What is that ‘more’? It is the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is the connecting of the Christian life to all of life and not simply to the spiritual part of life.

Derek’s book is certainly timely, as the issue of ‘there has to be more’ is on the minds of Christians around the world. It is also to the point. It addresses the things that people are asking and feeling in a book that is easy to read and a style that is ‘to the point’.

The book will help young people who are longing to see their lives

XII THERE'S GOT TO BE MORE

count for something in this broken world, to have an understanding of the comprehensiveness of the Kingdom of God, and to see how they can engage with the advancement of Christ's Kingdom in their life and work.

For those older in the faith, who may be stuck in the rut of the sacred-secular dichotomy, Derek's book offers a different vision and provides a framework for people in the middle of their lives to reorder those lives.

There's Got To Be More can point a way forward for pastors who may be watching helplessly the discontent of many of their congregations.

At this moment in history we are witnessing Christ calling his bride to get out of the building and into the marketplace and public square. Be challenged and encouraged by Derek Brown's new book.

Darrow L. Miller
Co-Founder, Disciple Nations Alliance

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is the culmination of many years of thinking and speaking on the Kingdom. Over that time, many writers have inspired me; in particular, E. Stanley Jones and his book *The Unshakeable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person* had a profound impact. Here was a man passionate about the Kingdom and articulate about how it operates. It is a book I would recommend everyone who wants to understand the Kingdom should read. Other writers who have been helpful are listed in the Bibliography at the end of the book.

Writing a book is also a team effort, so I would like to thank the many people who encouraged me to take the step of putting down on paper the teaching they had heard me present: in particular, Bronwen Healy and Gordon Brookes, who both faithfully followed me up to make sure I was acting on my commitment to write the book.

I also want to thank Deryck and Nancy Thomas for their enthusiasm to see the book published and their help in seeing this realised. My niece Claire Brown has done a wonderful job in designing the book and working on

the layout. I am very grateful for her skill and excitement about this project. Mick Brown from Inspire Publishing has also been a great resource, with his professional understanding of how to get a book published.

I am grateful also for the encouragement of my friend Darrow Miller. Our paths crossed quite providentially a few years back, and his input and wisdom as a brother and mentor have been a wonderful blessing to my life.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the support and encouragement to write this book that came from my daughter Samantha. Like Bronwen and Gordon, she kept on me to get it done, and I know this prodding was part of God's extended hand.

INTRODUCTION

Recently I presented a seminar called ‘Rediscovering the Kingdom of God’ to a group from my local church. After listening to my presentation, a guy called Matt approached me, thanked me for my teaching, and then made a comment that’s stuck with me ever since.

He said, “I go to church every Sunday, I watch all that’s going on, and I think ‘there’s got to be more to my Christian faith than this’.”

To be clear, Matt wasn’t bagging church, but he carried a desire to see his faith expressed in a meaningful way in the world in which he lives. Many Christians like Matt faithfully attend church each week, but are left with the feeling that only those who work within the church or on the mission field are serving the purposes of God. The rest are like bystanders whose role is to support and finance the work of the church and its outreaches. One of the primary reasons for this is that many Christians perceive the local church to be the Kingdom of God. In their minds, the Kingdom advances only through what the local church does.

Here’s a story that illustrates this very clearly. A young lawyer named

Sarah was asked by a friend what her ministry was. Drawing on all of the teaching she had heard over years of attending church, Sarah answered, “I teach Sunday School on Sunday mornings.” What a travesty! In her mind, nothing she did during the week in terms of her passion for justice, compassion and equity within her world counted.

Here is what she should have said: “God has given me a passion for justice, and I have the opportunity to express this every day in the work I do as a lawyer. I am so grateful for this avenue to express my faith and God’s call on my life. Oh, by the way, I also help out on Sunday at my local church as a volunteer in teaching Sunday School.”

To be able to respond like this, Sarah needs to see what the Kingdom really is. She needs to realise that being called to work as a lawyer is of equal value to being called to work in the church. Her work isn’t secular; it’s sacred.

So this book is written for Matt and Sarah. How can we help them realign their thinking so that what they do every day becomes a meaningful expression of God’s purpose for their lives?

The key to this change of thinking is a rediscovery of the Kingdom of God. This isn’t a new message – it is the Kingdom of God that lies at the heart of the teaching, life and action of Jesus, and it is the Kingdom that pervades His parables, miracles and passion. Jesus said the purpose He was sent to earth was to preach the Kingdom (Luke 4:42–44). Perhaps the most compelling point is that Jesus spent the last 40 days with His disciples speaking on one theme: the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:1–3).

If the Kingdom of God is the main message of Jesus, why is it we hear so little about the Kingdom in our churches? There are several reasons. Many evangelicals see the Kingdom message as part of a social gospel and have dismissed its relevance. Others have put the Kingdom off to the future, believing it will come when Jesus returns. Still others, as we have noted, believe the local church is the place where the Kingdom is expressed, so they focus on building the church, not the Kingdom.

Jesus said “Seek first the Kingdom” and “I will build the church.” We’ve done the opposite – putting the Kingdom off to the future and focusing on building

our local churches – so it’s no wonder we’re confused about the Kingdom. E. Stanley Jones, the missionary statesman, puts it succinctly: “If Jesus made the Kingdom of God the centre of His message and the centre of His endeavour, the greatest need of man, as I see it, is to rediscover the Kingdom of God.”¹

While we are primarily seeking to inspire Matt and Sarah to be agents for the Kingdom, there will be much in this book to encourage local church leaders to look beyond the vision they have for their congregations. Local churches should demonstrate a Kingdom focus in their role within their local communities. It is the role of the leader to facilitate and develop this vision.

However, it’s equally true that much Kingdom activity will take place outside of these local church initiatives. Once church leaders see the Kingdom, they will realise the incredible opportunity and responsibility they have as leaders to encourage their people to be agents of the Kingdom in every sphere of society.

While called to lead and develop the ministry of their local churches, local church leaders will at the same time recognise that people in their congregations will influence people and spheres the local church could never reach.

Rather than unsettle a church leader, this should inspire them to realise that even if they have a small church, the influence of a community of believers could be profound. What an exciting prospect! Their challenge will be how to balance their enthusiasm to develop the vision for their local church with the recognition that the Kingdom is expressed and advancing in spheres outside of what the local church is doing. Kingdom leaders will encourage their people to pursue these expressions of being about the Father’s business.

So let’s begin our journey to rediscover the Kingdom. Our main purpose is to enthuse Christians to transform their world. So our approach will be simple and, hopefully, practical – not heavily theological. There are many excellent resources on the Kingdom that form the backdrop to this study, and we will make the reader aware of some of these for their own study. But we will judge the success of this book by the way we are able to inspire men and women to be effective stewards of their gifts and callings in the many and varied spheres within which God has planted them.

PART ONE

Discovering the Kingdom

ONE

What was the message
of Jesus?

*I must preach the Kingdom of God . . .
for I was sent for this purpose.*
– Luke 4:44

The message of the Kingdom of God is important because it is the central message Jesus preached, a fact highlighted by the realisation that for the last 40 days Jesus had with His disciples, there was only one theme: the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:1–3).

The concept of the ‘Kingdom of God’ (or interchangeably the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’) is found more than 100 times in the first three Gospels and twice only in John’s Gospel (although eternal life and the Kingdom of God are interchangeable concepts), is the centre of John the Baptist’s proclamation concerning Jesus, is directly associated with Jesus’ presence – particularly in healing the sick, casting out demons, and as an explanation of Jesus’ ministry

and teaching – and it underpinned Jesus’ public inauguration of His ministry recorded in Luke 4:18–19 (taken from Isaiah 61).

In summary:

- » The Kingdom of God is the central message of the New Testament.
- » The first thing Jesus spoke about was the Kingdom.
(Mark 1:14–15; Matt 4:17)
- » The last thing Jesus spoke about to His disciples was the Kingdom.
(Acts 1:1–3)
- » Jesus said the purpose He was sent to earth was to preach the Kingdom.
(Luke 4:42–44)
- » All of the parables Jesus taught were about the Kingdom.
(Matt 13:19, 24,31,33)
- » Jesus said the gospel of the Kingdom must be preached to all the ends of the earth before He can return.
(Matt 24:14)
- » Acts – the book of the disciples responding to Jesus’ command – begins and ends with the Kingdom of God.
(Acts 1:3, 28:30–31)

Jesus came with a simple declaration: the Kingdom of God is at hand. God is not sidelined to some future utopia; He is at work in His creation and He invites us to join Him. Jesus encouraged His disciples to believe and pray that the benevolent reign of God would come into their world through their actions and prayer (Matt 6:9–13). While most Christians pay lip service to this concept, in practice we’ve either lost sight of what the Kingdom of God is, put it off to the future, or reduced it to our particular sense of mission.

It’s impossible to understand the purpose and mission of the local church without understanding the purpose and characteristics of the Kingdom of God. It’s also impossible to fulfil the Great Commission – to make disciples where we are by living under God’s rule and reign (Matthew 28 and Mark 16); the Great Commandment – to impart God’s unconditional love through our lives (John 13); the Cultural Mandate – to be engaged in and with the world but not conform to its lifestyle (John 17); the Creation Mandate – to exercise responsible dominion over the physical world (Genesis 2); or to outwork the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray, which included the phrase ‘God’s will be done on earth as it is in Heaven’, without understanding what the Kingdom of God really means.¹

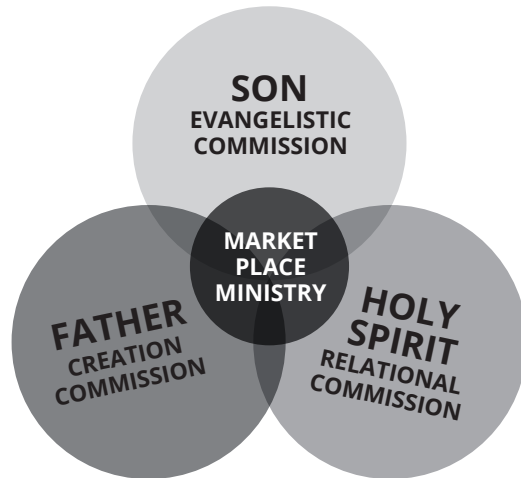
An understanding of the Kingdom provides us with a worldview that encompasses all of life and every part of society. Without this perspective, our faith becomes marginalised and privatised.

Considering how the Trinity works together helps to develop a comprehensive framework of truth. The three persons of the Trinity all cooperate in their work in the world; however, each takes the lead in the trinitarian activity for their special part in salvation history; so while the Father is primary in creation, the Word/Son is involved (John 1:1; Colossians 1:15–20; Hebrews 1:3; etc.), and the Creator Spirit too (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30: “You created all of them by your Spirit, and you give new life to the earth.”). Christ is primary in relation to reconciliation, and the Spirit in transformation and completion – yet they work together.³

Individuals, institutions and Christian ministries often grasp one aspect of the Trinity’s work and highlight their own particular gifts as the greatest, and compete with others. Some will focus more on creation development and maintenance, some on evangelism, and others on spiritual gifts and new creation. Yet we should all affirm the importance of each, and bless each one’s work if

AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE KINGDOM PROVIDES US WITH A WORLDVIEW THAT ENCOMPASSES ALL OF LIFE AND EVERY PART OF SOCIETY. WITHOUT THIS PERSPECTIVE, OUR FAITH BECOMES MARGINALISED AND PRIVATISED.

we are to have a properly balanced view of God's trinitarian work in creation, reconciliation and transformation. This is why we need to develop a three-mandate/commission theology (see diagram).



In these three commissions we see the breadth of the Kingdom. Christianity is more than a personal relationship with God. It's about discovering God's heart for all of his creation and finding out how His will can be expressed in every sphere of that creation. When we talk about the marketplace, we include the business community, the workplace, and those forums that create public policy. A Kingdom perspective will embolden Christians to influence and change the dynamics of the marketplace.

Jesus said the Kingdom of God has come, and it is our responsibility to explore what the Kingdom looks like in every part of human existence. Justine, a Burundian living in Rwanda, puts it well:

“I see what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God. I see that it's about changing this world, not just escaping it and retreating into our churches. If Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God is true, then everything must change. Everything must change.”⁴

– Justine, Rwanda

What a profound insight: when the Kingdom is embraced, everything must change. The change begins in us, and then it finds its expression in the world in which we live and work. It is about bringing God's mercy, compassion, justice and righteousness into every sphere of His creation. So Sarah, our lawyer friend, has the opportunity and responsibility to bring about change in her chosen field of endeavour by using her gifts, training and experience to be an agent for change – an agent for the Kingdom.

This change must go beyond seeing people come to our churches. If the Kingdom is only about planting churches and seeing the percentage of people calling themselves Christians increase, then the Kingdom has come to many countries in Africa. Rwanda is one example. In just 100 years, this country went from 'unreached' to 'churched', with approximately 90 per cent of the population attending church as members. It is the ultimate success story in the history of Christian mission – if the success criteria are church planting and church growth.

However, in just over 100 days, nearly one million citizens (and church members) were killed – by other citizens and church members – in a brutal genocide in the spring of 1994. Rwanda had seen tremendous success in evangelism and church planting, but little penetration of the gospel into ethnic relationships. So while church growth had been highly successful, the Kingdom had not fully come to this nation.

Kenya is another example: 80 per cent of this nation calls itself Christian, and the churches are full every Sunday. Yet in the world outside the church (the real world), Kenya is in great need of the transforming power of the gospel of the Kingdom.

Justin Thacker from the Evangelical Alliance tells the story of a young lady he met in Kenya:

“Hope was a poorly paid hospital worker who I met in Kenya while I worked there as a paediatrician. Hope was incredibly bright. She probably had the best English of anyone I met. She was intelligent, efficient, courteous, and fantastic with the

patients. Yet Hope was stuck in one of the lowest paid jobs available, even by Kenyan standards. Why? Because she refused to sleep with those who had authority over her. Once, when we talked about the fact that she was not yet married, she said this: ‘I am not married because I do not want to marry a Kenyan, I want to marry a Christian.’ What she meant by this is not that there were no Kenyan Christians but that corruption, especially by those in power, was so rife in her country that the person she would marry would be someone whose identity was primarily defined by the gospel of Jesus Christ, rather than working but struggling against a system that seemed designed to keep those with integrity at the bottom. One such Kenyan said this to me: ‘What we need is not more money from the West; that just encourages dependency. What we need is a transformation in our values.’”⁵

– JustineThacker

This is why the message of the Kingdom is so exciting and relevant. It’s holistic – it promotes community transformation both individually and institutionally in terms of values and practices. It is a message that can bring hope and change to Rwanda, Kenya and every nation, both outside the walls of the church and within.

Joseph Mattera, a pastor from New York who’s actively involved in working within his community, provides this helpful summary of the importance of the Kingdom message:

1. The Kingdom message connects the whole Bible and all its covenants to the original Cultural Mandate found in Genesis 1:28 (be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over the created order).
2. The Kingdom message connects Jesus in His dual role as both Creator and Redeemer (John 1:3, 11, 14; 3:16). Those who preach that the cross

is only for individual redemption miss the truth that the cross of Christ was also for the purpose of reconciling all things in the created order back to God (Colossians 1:20).

3. The Kingdom message brings the church back to the overarching narrative which reveals the ultimate purpose of God for the cross and the church: the gathering together in one all things under the Lordship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9–11).
4. The Kingdom message is a generational message connecting the dots between the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15) and the seed of Abraham who would become the church (Galatians 3:29), who, as children of God, are called to bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1–3), rule as kings in the earth (Genesis 17:5–7), and possess the gates of our enemies (Genesis 22:17).
5. To separate the gospel from the Kingdom is an attempt to give good news that only applies to the next life. Hence, it does away with the power of the messianic prophecies that speak of Jesus’ call as ruler over the nations (read Genesis 49:10; Psalm 2:9–11; Psalm 110:1–3; Isaiah 9:6,7; Daniel chapters 2, 4, 7).
6. Preaching the Kingdom motivates and releases all the saints in the church to serve as ministers of the Lord in His Kingdom.⁶

The Kingdom of God is the meta-narrative of the Bible. The Bible is the record of the self-revelation of God to the world. Christianity teaches that the self-revelation of God to the world reached a culmination in the Incarnation, when the Word became flesh. The Incarnation is the central interpretive principle of the Bible.

The biblical scholar F. F. Bruce argued as much:

“ . . . the Christian gospel . . . tells how for the world’s redemption God entered into history, the eternal came into time, the Kingdom of Heaven invaded the realm of earth, in the great

events of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.”⁷

– F. F. Bruce

We see from creation that God’s purpose was for men and women to be his ambassadors on earth to extend his benevolent rule (Gen 1:26–28). Jesus himself believed in a biblical meta-narrative. In Mark 1:15 he announces, “The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.” In saying this, he indicates that God has been working out a plan through history. The Kingdom of God has finally arrived, and Jesus saw his life as a fulfilment of this plan.

So having established the centrality and importance of the Kingdom of God from the Biblical narrative, let’s explore what the Kingdom is.

TWO

Kingdom is the sovereign rule of God

The Kingdom is the sphere of God’s goodness.

– Kevin Costa

Accepting the Kingdom is the key focus of the Gospels and the meta-narrative of the Scriptures leads to the important question: what is the Kingdom? To help answer this, we’ll look at eight statements that encapsulate key aspects of the Kingdom. In considering each one we will explore what practical differences these truths should bring to our lives.

When Jesus introduced the Kingdom to his disciples, he spoke about the rule of God that exists in Heaven. He went on to say that this rule is now to be expressed in the earth. “Our Father who is in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.” (Matt 6:10). In other words, Christianity is about Heaven invading earth, not about us escaping here to go to Heaven.

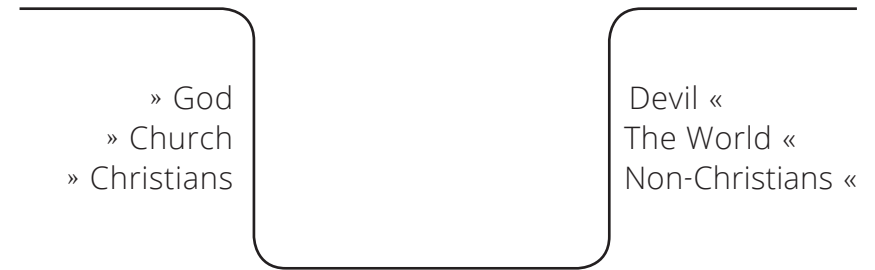
“Fundamentally, the Kingdom of God is the rule and authority of God himself being worked out on earth. In this rule and authority, God intervenes to rescue, preserve and save His people, puts right the wrongs in the world and manifestly establishes justice and righteousness.”¹

So, a fundamental principle of the Kingdom is God’s sovereignty. Jesus said after the resurrection, “All authority in Heaven and earth has been given to me.” (Matt 28:18). This means every part of creation is subject to Christ. Abraham Kuyper, a noted exponent of God’s sovereignty, was speaking to a university audience in Amsterdam and was arguing that scholarship is an important form of Christian discipleship. Since scholarship deals with God’s world, it has to be done in such a way that it honours Christ. Kuyper concluded his address with this bold declaration: “There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, ‘This is mine! This belongs to me!’”²

God exercises His sovereignty in two ways: saving grace and common grace. As agents of saving grace, Christians are to evangelise and bring people to Christ. Colson states: “As agents of God’s common grace, we are called to help sustain and renew his creation, to uphold the created institutions of family and society, to pursue science and scholarship, to create works of art and beauty, and to heal and help those suffering from the results of the Fall”.³ This is what Duncan calls ‘integral mission’ – a holistic approach embracing social action and gospel proclamation. Our proclamation has social consequences, and our social involvement has evangelistic consequences. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and material, personal change and structural change remain and belong together.⁴

GOD EXERCISES
HIS SOVEREIGNTY
IN TWO WAYS:
SAVING GRACE AND
COMMON GRACE.

All of life is sacred. To divide the world into sacred and secular domains is to deny the sovereignty of God. Over the years I have employed a very simple diagram to illustrate the wrong way that many Christians look at the world. Here it is:



Many Christians see the world this way. There are two groups, one which is made up of the good guys – the Christians – on one side of a great chasm, and the bad guys – the non-Christians – on the other side. Jesus is the Lord of the Church, but Satan is the Lord of the World.

Evangelism involves sending some brave souls from the good side to go across to the bad side in order to convince some of the bad guys to join us, the good guys. This will build the church, but we don’t have to worry about what happens in the world, as that’s like ‘polishing brass on a sinking ship’. When we add in some last-day eschatology, then the sooner Jesus can come to get us out of this mess, the better.

So let’s summarise what this view of the world really means:

1. God is not in control of all that happens on the earth.
2. There is a struggle going on between two equal Kingdoms – just like *Star Wars*.
3. Christians develop a ‘them and us’ mentality – and don’t feel comfortable in the world.
4. Christian responsibility begins and ends with evangelism and building the church – getting people from the ‘bad side’ to join the church.
5. Other efforts to transform the community are considered a waste of time.
6. Christian ministry is expressed within the church or in mission and evangelism.

The main Christian focus here is to increase the number of people in the church, and Christianity doesn't take responsibility for what happens outside the church. Here's a sad example of this way of thinking⁵:

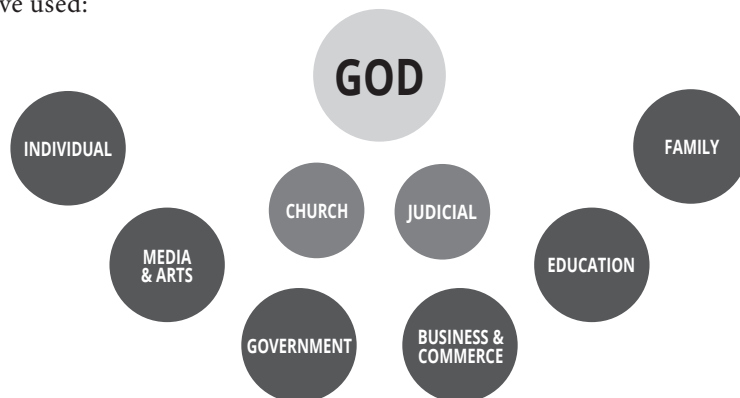
Several years ago a British TV journalist wanted to explore the concept that Christianity should be a positive influence within a community. He chose Dallas, Texas, to test this theory out, because that city has the highest weekly church attendance in the USA.

However, when he visited Dallas and looked at its demographics in terms of crime, corruption and education, he concluded that the city was so violent and underdeveloped that most people would not choose to raise their children there.

The reporter then asked Christian leaders from Dallas how they felt about the poverty, racial tension and general state of their city. He chose representative Christians from mainstream denominations. Their general response was, "These issues really are not our areas of responsibility." They knew little about their city and, more regrettably, showed no concern.

While it's easy for us to judge this sort of response, it's quite consistent with the diagram we have been using. These leaders were focused on their churches and no doubt ran various evangelistic outreaches, but that was the extent of their sense of Christian responsibility to their community.

So is there another way of looking at the world that is consistent with the view that God is sovereign and that He wants us to see the Kingdom expressed in every sphere of our communities? Here's another simple diagram I have used:



What are we trying to say from this diagram? God is over all of his creation. All of life relates to God. There's no divide between sacred spheres and secular spheres. It's possible to demonstrate the Kingdom of God in business, just as it is within the family.

The good news of the Kingdom – the gospel – has different applications in every sphere. For the individual, the gospel challenges him or her to surrender their lives to the King in repentance and faith, and to live their lives to honour their Redeemer.

For the family, the message of the Kingdom is about the principles of relationship and mutual support that make the family the building block of any society. For the marketplace, the Kingdom challenges us to conduct our affairs with integrity, ethics and generosity. And so it goes on for every sphere. The Kingdom of God is relevant and potentially revolutionary for every part of God's world.

Each of these spheres can be influenced by the people of the Kingdom. What happens in each of these spheres is equally important. To serve in the marketplace or in any of the spheres within God's creation is a calling, just like it is to be in church ministry. Sarah is called and equipped to serve the purposes of God as a lawyer, just like her friend who is working on the mission field to bring about community transformation.

One other important point is that the Kingdom is not an imposed authority from the top down. My concern is that some recent teaching on the impact of the Kingdom in society is based on Old Testament concepts, which would see Christian principles imposed on subjugated spheres within the community. This is not the way Jesus talked about the Kingdom.

Jesus made it clear that authority in the Kingdom is expressed by humility and service, not by imposing our will on others (Luke 22:24–27). The heart of the Kingdom is the cross – a life laid down for others to benefit. The Kingdom is not about triumphalism and domination; it's about humility, service and godly influence.⁶ Joseph, Daniel and Esther are Biblical examples of this principle at work.

The Kingdom of God is about influence and impact that come out of

lives that are sown sacrificially in every area of life. Jesus taught that the Kingdom is like a seed that is planted in the ground, which through laying down its life produces fruit. The power of the Kingdom is in the life within the seed, not its size. Faithfulness can produce lasting and wide-ranging fruit.

The Kingdom is the rule of God – God’s sovereignty – being worked out in the earth. What does this mean for us in practical terms?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

God’s will is to be expressed in every sphere of life.

ILLUSTRATION

God’s will is to be expressed in every sphere of life

One of the clearest historical examples of this principle at work is the impact of a small group of Christians within England in the late 18th century, who came to be known as the Clapham Sect.⁷ William Wilberforce often used Clapham as a gathering place for dinners and discussions among distinguished friends and influential allies who came from different political persuasions – the socialist left to the conservative right.

The core members of the Clapham Sect included:

- » Josiah Wedgwood – founder of Wedgwood pottery and the creator of the plate showing a slave in chains with the inscription ‘Am I not a man and a brother?’.
- » John Newton – a former slave trader and author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*.
- » Thomas Clarkson – who had a genius for organisation and imaginative publicity, along with innovative methods for investigating social phenomena.
- » Henry Thornton – a banker and financial genius who gave generously to support the work of the Clapham Sect.
- » Zachary Macaulay – philanthropist and estate manager in the West Indies, who was disgusted by Jamaican slavery and whose financial support was a key.

The work of the Claphamites inspired a broad agenda of political and social reforms in late 18th and early 19th century England, including:

- » a ban on bullfighting and bear baiting
- » suspension of the lottery, and prison reform
- » improved working conditions in factories

- » banking reform
- » setting higher standards of morality for public officials and politics.

They also pioneered the use of voluntary societies and organised advocacy groups to advocate causes, such as:

- » Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- » Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery
- » The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor
- » The Society for the Reformation of Prison Discipline
- » Missionary organisations, such as The Church Missionary Society.

This small group of committed, influential and passionate believers brought transformation to many domains within their society. Through hard work, careful strategy and passionate endurance, they changed the face of their country. Such an example inspires us all to see what God can do with us in our generation.

THREE

Kingdom is a present reality

Change your life.

The Kingdom of God is here.

– Matt 4:17

When Jesus began his ministry, he said “The Kingdom of God is at hand.” (Mk 1:15). Yet later on, Jesus talked about things that were to happen in the future concerning the Kingdom, so we see here an important principle about the Kingdom. It is both ‘now’ and ‘not yet’. There is a tension here that needs to be recognised.¹

If we focus solely on the ‘now’ of the Kingdom, we can reduce the Kingdom to social action focused on changing the world. Alternatively, if we focus on the ‘not yet’ emphasis we fail to address the current pains and needs of the world.

Jesus saw the ministry of the Kingdom was fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 61. In Luke 4:18–19, Jesus outlines the integral and holistic nature

of the Kingdom. It is good news to those who are disinherited – physically, socially, politically or spiritually. The Kingdom relates to every level and arena of human life and existence. The Hebrew word ‘shalom’ aptly describes the result of the Kingdom coming to a person or a community. It means the establishment of peace between man and God, and the well-being, welfare or safety of an individual or a community.

Based on Isaiah 65:17–25, Ray Bakke outlines seven characteristics of a healthy community from the heart of God:

1. Public celebration and happiness. (18, 19)
2. Public health for children and the aged. (20)
3. Housing for all. (21)
4. Food for all. (22)
5. Meaningful work. (22, 23)
6. Family support systems. (23)
7. Absence of violence. (25)²

So we see the Kingdom is very much about the here and now. It has something to say about healthcare, housing, employment, food supply, supporting the family and finding ways to remove violence. The Micah Project puts it this way: “We believe that every child and adult has the right to a home, an income, healthcare, education, safety, dignity, and connection with their community of choice.”³ While it is true that individual transformation can bring about social change, it’s wrong to conclude that individual transformation alone is either sufficient or a full reflection of the heart of God for individuals and their communities.

The question arises: who is responsible for community transformation? Is it the local church or is it Christian individuals working within their spheres of influence? The answer is both. Local churches can make a significant impact within their local communities as they take opportunities to outwork the

Kingdom in practical ways. Often we find that churches develop their own particular areas of expertise and interest in serving their communities. For example, I attend a church that has built a large community centre for the purpose of connecting with the public through sport and the provision of facilities the community can use. As a result, the community our church serves goes far beyond those who attend church on Sundays.

As the same time, community transformation can be initiated by concerned Christians who God connects with various sections of society. I have friends, Dan and Catrina, who are working to assist young women from Thailand – women who, mainly because of poverty, have found themselves in prostitution. The Kingdom answer for these young women is twofold: they discover the joy of a relationship with God, and this relationship then helps them to move out of slavery. Dan and Catrina, working with an organisation called Destiny Rescue, have set up a business called Moselle to sell clothes made by these young ladies in Thailand.

This employment opportunity has given these girls the chance to leave prostitution and start new lives. Imagine the hypocrisy of saying to these young women, “You can have a relationship with God now, but we can’t do anything to help you with your present pain and suffering – you’ll have to wait for the Kingdom to come. Then God will wipe away your tears.” This is not the whole gospel, but because many of us have not understood the Kingdom, we’ve often offered this type of shortsighted solution.

“To hope for a better future in this world – for the poor, the sick, the lonely and depressed, for the slaves, the refugees, the hungry and homeless, for the abused, the paranoid, the downtrodden and despairing, and in fact the whole wide, wonderful and wounded world – is not something else, something extra, something tacked on to ‘the gospel’ as an afterthought. And to work for that intermediate hope, the surprising hope that comes forward from God’s ultimate future into God’s urgent present, is not a distraction from the task of ‘mission’ and

‘evangelism’ in the present. It is a central, essential, vital and life-giving part of it.”⁴

– Tom Wright

The coming of the Kingdom isn’t a message; it is an event. When Jesus declared the Kingdom of God was now at hand, He wasn’t simply saying a new philosophy had entered the human arena. He was explaining that in His life something was happening in and on this earth. This coming of the Kingdom begins with the incarnation, and its inauguration is completed with the resurrection and ascension (Dan 7:13–14). The resurrection leads to a mission to the world based on Jesus’ lordship over the world (Matt 28:18–20). This mission of the church is to see the Kingdom come to earth (Acts 1:3; Matt 6:10).

All the major events that followed Jesus’ inauguration of the Kingdom – the resurrection and ascension of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit – are not focused on taking us away from the earth, but rather on making us into agents to transform the earth. Our challenge as Christians is to know what the will of God is, and to work with God by the power of the Holy Spirit to see that will happen in earth.

So our concern for our communities – including the poor, the excluded and the marginalised – is not something we express because we want to bring the Kingdom near. Rather, it’s because the Kingdom is already near.

TO HOPE FOR
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IN THIS WORLD . . .
IS NOT SOMETHING
ELSE, SOMETHING
EXTRA, SOMETHING
TACKED ON TO
‘THE GOSPEL’ AS AN
AFTERTHOUGHT.

We practice the principles of the Kingdom because it’s the right thing to do – not to try to impress others with our piety.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Kingdom living is about what happens here and now in the context of eternal realities.

ILLUSTRATION

Kingdom living is about what happens here and now

Garbage collectors are the most despised group of people in Egyptian society. In Cairo they live amongst the garbage they collect for recycling in an area outside the city called Muqattam. Thirty years ago, Fr. Samaan, a Coptic Orthodox priest, gave up his job in the city to become an ordained priest in this garbage village.⁵

When he began, the village had no churches, schools, electricity, water, medical care or markets. It was just garbage, people and pigs.

Father Samaan’s work sprang from an incarnational compassion for these people that saw him going into piggens to reach out to those who were hiding and afraid. It has seen people released from demonic oppression – released to live out Christian lives that include restitution for things they have done wrong, and the taking of evangelism into every sector of Cairo.

Father Saaman brought hope and dignity to this community in a way that clearly demonstrates that the Kingdom is already near.

Thousands have become Christians, and the village is now a bustling, hopeful community of thirty thousand people. They still collect garbage; however, they now have amenities, three schools, a hospital, employment training facilities, markets and many churches. The churches are located in caves that were blocked by rubble. It was only when one small cave was discovered that residents realised they were surrounded by caves.

While that first cave was being converted into a chapel, residents found another one that is now used for church services of up to four thousand people. They soon realised that another cave could be transformed into an enormous amphitheatre to seat fifteen thousand people. Regular church services are held there, and people come from all over Cairo – not just from the garbage village – to worship with other Christians. Father Samaan now pastors the largest church in the Middle East and one of the best known in Egypt.

FOUR

The Kingdom is more than the church

*The church is only the church . . .
when it exists for others.*
– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

At first glance this statement may sound as though I am against the church. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The church, which is the people of God, is given the responsibility to see the Kingdom of God established in the earth (Matt 6:10). In this same address, Jesus made it clear that his disciples were the only salt that can savour society, and the only light which counters the darkness (Matt 5:13–16). So let's be clear: in God's economy God's people – the church – are central to his purposes being realised in the earth.

But the strong implication of this teaching from Jesus is that the church is to bring light and flavour to the world – not to focus on itself. As Dietrich

Bonhoeffer powerfully observed, “The church is only the church when it exists for others.”¹

In the adage about the chicken and egg, it is not possible to say which comes first. This is not true for the Kingdom and church. Clearly the Kingdom comes first. To properly understand the church, we must see it in the context of the Kingdom. Christopherson puts it well: “You can often get a hold of ‘church’ and miss ‘Kingdom’; but when you get a hold of ‘Kingdom’ what follows is a clear sense of ‘church’.”² Theology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology. What has happened is that we have put the Kingdom off to the future and have tried to interpret the role of the church in a Kingdom vacuum. As a result, we’ve focused on the church as an end in itself.

Howard Snyder has spent many years exploring and writing about the Kingdom of God. In his latest book, *Models of the Kingdom*, Snyder explores the tensions you find when you look at the Kingdom. One of the six points of tension he identifies has to do with the church and the Kingdom – the tension between seeing the church and the Kingdom as essentially the same or as clearly different. Based on his years of research, Snyder concludes that the theology of E. Stanley Jones, a passionate advocate for the Kingdom, is the best example of holding the tensions of the Kingdom in proper balance.³ Jones insisted that the Kingdom was not the church, and yet he maintained a key linkage between the two:

“The Christian Church, while it holds within itself the best life of the Kingdom, is not the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is absolute, the Church is relative – relative to something beyond itself, the Kingdom. The Kingdom judges and redeems the Church, and the Church is potent to the degree that it obeys the Kingdom and embodies the life and spirit of the Kingdom. The Church is not an end in itself, the Kingdom is the end.”⁴

What we are looking at is a rediscovery of Kingdom theology. Ric Benson, pastor of a large church in Brisbane, Australia, argues that only a recovery

of a Kingdom theology will bring about Kingdom transformation. “There is a current and exciting movement around the world of the Spirit challenging the church to examine itself, particularly in light of Kingdom theology.”⁵

A Kingdom theology shows that all creation belongs to God and that our mission is to work with the Holy Spirit to redeem creation both individually and corporately. The Kingdom mission is much bigger than planting new churches. The standard evangelical view of the church’s mission is to prepare for Jesus’ return through prayer, Bible study, worship and witnessing.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, WHILE IT HOLDS WITHIN ITSELF THE BEST LIFE OF THE KINGDOM, IS NOT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

“If we focus exclusively on these disciplines,” Colson observes, “and in the process we ignore our responsibility to redeem our surrounding culture – our Christianity will remain privatised and marginalised. Turning our backs on our culture is a betrayal of our biblical mandate and our own heritage because it denies God’s sovereignty over all of life . . . If the church turns inward now, if we focus only on our own needs, we will miss the opportunity to provide answers at a time when people are sensing a deep longing for meaning and order.”⁶

What a powerful insight! When you reduce the Kingdom down to that which is just private and personal, the message of the church becomes marginalised. The answer for the church to become relevant is to rediscover the Kingdom. If you don’t have the Kingdom, you don’t have a message and a perspective that embraces all of life. The Kingdom of God brings to the equation a sense of who God is – reflected in our attitudes, our compassion, our acts of mercy, our desire for justice and our example of righteousness.

Because we have lost sight of the Kingdom, or we’ve put it off to the future, we have focused instead on building the church. As a result, many Christians believe building the church is the primary, if not only, way through which the Kingdom is expressed in the earth.

Once we see the Kingdom, we recognise the central importance of the church, but we also see that God intends for his will to be expressed in every sphere of society. This means most Kingdom activity should take place outside of church meetings – in the marketplace, in schools, hospitals, businesses, media, legislatures, and so on.

When it comes to the church, we can think of Sunday as the church ‘gathered’ and Monday as the church ‘scattered’. Sunday then becomes a time to strengthen, encourage and equip Christians to take the Kingdom into their world.

“Are many ministers inadvertently letting their zeal for evangelism and their desire to build a strong local church distract them from asking how God might want to use their people outside the local context? There is a danger, I believe, that we will view church members exclusively in terms of how they can contribute to the local household of God rather than how they might also contribute to the growth of the Kingdom of Christ, wherever he has placed them. And there is a danger that we will become too focused on getting non-Christians into church to hear the minister rather than into the Kingdom of God by hearing the word.”⁷

As church growth expert Eddie Gibbs says, “Churches should shift from an invitational, ‘Come’, seeker service strategy (which works in largely churchled suburbs) to a ‘Go’ strategy of dispersal, with a sustained commitment to infiltrating each segment of this fragmenting world.”⁸

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Let’s make Sunday relevant to Monday.

ILLUSTRATION

Let’s make Sunday relevant to Monday

The power to realign what happens on Sundays primarily lies in the hands of the pastor. A friend of mine, Brian Medway, is a pastor and a leader of a large network of churches. He encourages pastors to look beyond Sunday. Brian has come up with the idea of equipping Monday’s church on Sunday. He says “Build up the church that functions on Monday and you will see the changes you desire on Sunday.”

Here is how Brian defines the Monday church.

1. The term Monday Church is used here to refer to everything that individual believers or groups of believers do in the wider community when they are not engaged in Sunday Church activities.
2. Monday Church refers to intentional Kingdom of God activity designed to bring all aspects of a particular sphere of the community under the rule of God.
3. Monday Church is about Kingdom ministry influence, not institutional structure.
4. Monday Church is every believer, everywhere, any time.
5. Monday church simply refers to the people of God in the ‘world’ or the community, who have an intention of being the tangible expression of God’s redemptive presence and plan.
6. The expression ‘Monday Church’ is deliberately chosen to highlight the fact that ‘church’ doesn’t mean Sunday or Wednesday night or a building, but a strategic ministry of the Kingdom of God carried out intentionally by people who call on his name – wherever they may be.
6. Monday Church is an expression of the church in a given community sphere of influence.

7. Monday church is the process of taking church to where the unchurched people are, not trying to get the unchurched people to where the '(Sunday) church' is.

Here is an opportunity for pastors to make Sunday relevant to their congregations. How can their people apply their faith in business, in the workplace, at university and at home? What are the ethical challenges they face? How do they find wisdom to make good decisions? How do they balance work and life? What are the keys to handling money and ambition? How should they respond to failure, disappointment and stress? How do they relate to people who are not Christians?

FIVE

Awareness of the Kingdom
is within every person

We live and move in him, can't get away from him.

– Acts 17:28

When Jesus was talking to the Pharisees in Luke 17:21, he made another important observation about the Kingdom. He said to them, “The Kingdom is in your midst,” referring to himself, but this can also be translated as “The Kingdom of God is within you.” This concept is reiterated by Paul in Romans when he says, “That which is known about God is evident within them.” (Rom 1:17). The German philosopher Kant wrote: “Two things inspire me to awe: the starry heavens above and the moral universe within.”¹

Described another way, each of us is made in the image of God, which means we have an inner awareness of the principles of God. We are made to obey the laws of the Kingdom. Like the law of gravity, these laws operate whether we acknowledge them or not. Why, for example, does it feel good when we do good? Dr Adler, a Jewish psychiatrist, states: “I suppose all the

ills of human personality can be traced back to one thing – not understanding the meaning of the phrase ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”²

This is how the Kingdom operates. When we make choices that hurt others, we experience inner disquiet because we are working against the truth of God that is within us. Living against the laws of the Kingdom affects our health. Psychiatrist William Sadler put it this way: “If we lived in a truly Christian way, half the diseases of the people of America would drop off tomorrow morning and we would stand up a new and healthy people.”³

To say we are made in the image of God and that we have an awareness of the Kingdom within us does not mean we have entered the Kingdom. Jesus made it clear in John 3 that unless we are born again, we cannot enter the Kingdom of God. While the evidences of the Kingdom are around us, and even within us, salvation only comes to those who submit their lives to the King of the Kingdom.

When addressing the crowd in Athens, Paul recognised that people are searching for God and that He isn’t far from them because He is the source of all life (Acts 17:24–29). Because we are made in the image of God, each of us has within us what Wright calls ‘the echoes of the Spirit’.⁴ He identifies four characteristics:

- » Longing for justice
- » Quest for spirituality
- » Hunger for relationships
- » Delight in beauty

Longing for Justice. This longing for justice is classically expressed in the words of John Lennon’s song *Imagine*. Imagine, Lennon says, a place where there is no more hatred and war, where people love and accept each other. As followers of Jesus we have been taught to pray for God’s will to be done

BECAUSE WE ARE
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on earth. That means that God’s passion for justice must become ours too. Look at the amazing work done by Bishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa in establishing the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation. This process enabled victims and perpetrators to be reconciled through confession and forgiveness. Due to this echo of the Spirit within every culture, this work struck a chord across the world.

Quest for Spirituality. Today many people recognise that spirituality is important. Science is no longer seen as having the full answer, and there is more openness to the fact that the physical world is not enough. When Paul came into Athens, he recognised this search for spirituality and said that God was “not far from each one of us”, that truth about God was reflected in the writings of their poets. Rather than condemning their false gods, Paul appealed to this echo of the Spirit – the search for truth and meaning.

Hunger for Relationships. Marriage continues to be popular despite the divorce rate. People recognise they belong in communities and that we were made to be social creatures. On that fateful day, September 11, most of those within the Twin Towers called their families and friends, because at the end of the day, relationships are what matter most in life. This voice reflects its owner – one who is totally committed to relationships of every sort, but also one who can share the pain of brokenness of each of these relationships.

Delight in Beauty. The world in which we live is full of beauty. There are moments, watching a sunset or viewing a majestic mountain range, when this voice echoes strongly in our hearts. It reflects the heart of the one who made the world and all things in it, who saw when He had finished creation that it was all very good.

These four voices point people towards God because they have their source in him. They show the Holy Spirit is present in every field of human endeavour. He is there to connect people to God, from whom these voices emanate. Our role as Christians is to work with the Holy Spirit to bear witness to this truth.

“This is our calling as Christians – to live redemptively in the world because we are looking forward to experiencing it in all its beauty and fullness in the new creation of God’s promise. We have a new song to sing, the song of the redeemed but we do not sing as those who have no part of the life of the world.”⁵

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Look for ‘connecting points’ amongst those you work with and relate to.

ILLUSTRATION

Look for ‘connecting points’

One historical example of this principle – awareness of the Kingdom is within us – is Mahatama Gandhi. In 1947, a year before he was assassinated, Mahatama Gandhi gave his grandson Arun a piece of paper.

On it Gandhi wrote what he called the seven blunders of the world. These seven sins, he said, were forms of passive violence we are prone to participate in if we are not careful.⁶ Here is Gandhi’s list:

- » Wealth without Work
- » Pleasure without Conscience
- » Commerce without Morality
- » Politics without Principles
- » Knowledge without Character
- » Science without Humanity
- » Worship without Sacrifice

What a powerful and accurate analysis of our modern society! No one could question that if we could address this vacuum of values that Gandhi has identified, our communities would be better places and individuals would be valued as made in the image of God.

While as Christians our response to these ‘sins’ may differ from those advocated by Gandhi, we cannot ignore the insight he had into our world and the issues that need to be addressed. The other Kingdom characteristic of this list is that it addresses a wide cross-section of social life: money, entertainment, business, politics, education, science and religion.

The Kingdom by its very nature addresses each of these spheres and challenges us to reassess our tendency to selfishness and self-absorption, which are evident in the ‘sins’ Gandhi identifies.

As McLaren observes, “The Kingdom of God, then, is a revolutionary, counter-cultural movement – proclaiming a ceaseless rebellion against the tyrannical trinity of money, sex and power.”⁷

SIX

Kingdom happens outside church meetings

*Before I'd spoken half a dozen sentences,
the Holy Spirit fell on them just as he did on us.*

– Acts 11:15

Take some clear examples from the Book of Acts. Phillip is in the midst of a revival when the Holy Spirit directs him to leave this move of God to go into the desert (Acts 8:28). There, Phillip is led to meet a leader from Ethiopia who just happens to be reading Isaiah 53 and is wondering who this prophecy is talking about. Clearly, the Holy Spirit was at work long before Phillip came onto the scene. What made it a significant moment from a Kingdom perspective was Phillip's obedience to be at the right place at the right time to work with the Holy Spirit.

A similar theme emerges in the story of Cornelius – a God-fearing Roman centurion who is visited by an angel and directed to send men to Jerusalem to get Peter to come to his house (Acts 10:1). Peter struggles

with this situation because the work of the Kingdom – initiated by the Holy Spirit – is happening in a realm outside his frame of reference, and in an area of society that he believed he was not to engage with. This is an important principle of the Kingdom: to be able to recognise and work with the activity of the Holy Spirit as He moves into new spheres.

“The week is not divided into one Lord’s day when the rule of God is acknowledged and six human days in which factories, stock exchange, legislatures, media personalities, and military juntas take charge and rule with their lies and guns and money, nor is the rule restricted to occasional interventions that are later remembered as great historical events – exodus and exile, Christmas and Easter.”¹

Most Kingdom activity will take place outside of church meetings. Let me go further: I believe what happens on Monday is more critical to the advance of the Kingdom than what happens on Sunday. Sunday is to equip us for Monday. On Monday we need to recognise the Holy Spirit is at work in every part of God’s creation. The Holy Spirit can, and does, speak and work within the lives of those who have not yet met the King of the Kingdom.

Holy Spirit and the Kingdom

1. Jesus gave to His disciples the message of the Kingdom (Gospels; Acts 1:3).
2. Then He and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to empower the disciples to be effective in seeing the Kingdom come (John 14:26, 16:7).
3. Our responsibility is to understand the message of the Kingdom and to work with the Holy Spirit to see it outworked.
4. We recognise the Holy Spirit is already at work in our communities and all the spheres of our world.
5. We recognise that all Christians are individually gifted by the Holy Spirit to bring the Kingdom to their world.

6. This means the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the Kingdom will be expressed in a great variety of ways. He is called the Spirit of truth, justice, life, grace, and supplication and conviction.
7. Holy Spirit will take us into uncharted, challenging areas – Ethiopian leader (Acts 8:29), Ananias (Acts 9:10), Cornelius (Acts 10:19).
8. It’s not always easy to find the right way (Acts 16:6).
9. When the Spirit speaks we have to take the action to see the Kingdom planted.

If we reduce the Kingdom by limiting the scope within which the Holy Spirit can work, then we limit the effectiveness of the gospel. Rather, we should be asking God to show us where the Holy Spirit is already at work within our communities and then begin looking for ways to work with Him for the expansion of the Kingdom. Bono put it well when he quoted some advice he received early in his life from a Christian mentor. He said to Bono, “Don’t ask God to bless what you are doing; rather, find out what God is doing, for that is already blessed.”²

THIS IS AN
IMPORTANT
PRINCIPLE OF THE
KINGDOM: TO BE
ABLE TO RECOGNISE
AND WORK WITH
THE ACTIVITY OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT
AS HE MOVES INTO
NEW SPHERES.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Look for the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing the way for the Kingdom to advance in your sphere of activity.

ILLUSTRATION

Look for the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing the way for the Kingdom to advance

A recent example of this principle is the Camel method that's being used around the world to reach Muslims. While it's gained some critics, others believe it has its place in building bridges with Muslims to introduce them to Jesus.

The Camel method uses a legend from Islam to introduce Jesus to Muslims. The legend says every good Muslim knows 99 names for Allah, but the 100th name was only revealed to the camel. The 100th name is Jesus or, in Arabic, 'Isa'. Muslims are then pointed to verses in the Quran that show Isa is holy, has power over death, and knows the path to Heaven, before the evangelist connects the Islamic feast of sacrifice, Eid al-Adha, with God's plan of salvation for mankind.

International Mission Board strategist Kevin Greeson developed the Camel method after working among Muslims for several years without success. The IMB is the mission arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. Greeson says the method treats Muslims with respect, while challenging them to confront their own sacred writings as a bridge to the Good News revealed in the Bible. The method has proven to be very effective in engaging Muslims in a conversation about Jesus.

A frontier mission strategist who worked among Muslims in the Philippines for 10 years weighed in on the debate over the controversial Camel method of reaching Muslims, calling it "very useful". David Taylor (a pseudonym), senior editor of the Global Mission Database and author of *Operation 10/40 Window*, said the method is bearing "remarkable fruit all over the world".

Taylor pointed to Acts 15 in the Bible, where Apostles Paul and Barnabas debated believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees about gentile

believers needing to be circumcised. Taylor said both in the case of Acts 15 and in the Camel method, the Holy Spirit "led field missionaries to use a certain approach that minimises misunderstanding with those they are trying to reach, and ultra-conservative people back at home get wind of it and try to stir up trouble for them."³

SEVEN

Kingdom is expressed in
a variety of passions

*The Kingdom is all encompassing –
affecting every level and arena of human existence.*

– Malcolm Duncan

As we've established, the Kingdom is all about the will of God being done on the earth. For this to happen, "God's passion must become our passion." (Wright). When we consider the nature and character of God, we recognise that His passions are broad and diverse. This means the Kingdom will be expressed in a wide variety of passions.

The following table highlights some of the different passions we find within the different members of the Godhead.¹

FATHER	SON	HOLY SPIRIT
Creation	Salvation	Completion
Above	Among	In us
Science	Scripture	Experience
Social justice, art and politics, responsible dominion	Evangelism, discipleship, personal ethics	Emotional health and spiritual power, signs and wonders, worship
Reflective	Proactive	Affective
Rationalism	Activism	Emotionalism
Providence	Justification	Sanctification
Creation commission	Evangelism commission	Relational commission

Let me add just a bit of theology to explain this table. In the unfolding of creation, each member of the Godhead has taken the lead in various phases. For example, we see the Father took the lead in creation, the Son in salvation, and the Holy Spirit in completing the work begun through the Incarnation. Therefore we can link the three great commissions to each member of the Trinity.

It follows that each of these mandates reflects different aspects of the Kingdom. Creation mandate has a strong emphasis on social justice, dominion, arts and politics. The evangelistic mandate focuses on evangelism and discipleship, while the relational mandate focuses more on spiritual power and signs and wonders. So here we've explained three different streams within the Christian tradition: the liberals, evangelicals and pentecostals. Each stream validly represents different godly passions.

Because the Kingdom is a clear Biblical concept, it's not easy for us to dismiss it; however, what does tend to happen is that we reduce the Kingdom to a dimension we feel comfortable with – one that represents our particular sense of mission. For some, the Kingdom is most clearly identified with the local church. This means that what the local church is doing is the most

relevant expression of the Kingdom in the earth. This leads some Christians to conclude that supporting the local church is the only way for the Kingdom to be expressed; however, it's possible to reduce the Kingdom to other equally valid expressions of the Christian faith. For some, the Kingdom begins and ends with evangelism. Others believe that being a Christian must involve social action. From a Kingdom perspective, though, we see they're all expressions of the heart of God for His creation.

GOD'S PASSION
MUST BECOME
OUR PASSION.

Once we see the vastness of the Kingdom, it helps us understand how other people can be passionate about a range of issues that may not stir our hearts. We are to pursue the passion God has given us, but at the same time we are to validate and appreciate the passion He has put in others.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Let's be passionate about our call to express the Kingdom, and let's acknowledge and validate the different passions God has given to others to equally express the Kingdom.

ILLUSTRATION

Let's be passionate about our call and recognise the passion of others

A Kingdom perspective is the proper base for unity within the body of Christ. A friend of mine, Ian Shelton, has spent many years promoting unity amongst churches within his hometown of Toowoomba, in Queensland, Australia.

Pastors from a wide variety of theological backgrounds have found a place of acceptance and support in their weekly meeting and the relationships it has produced. This spirit of unity has seen support for a wide variety of passions that have been expressed in the life of the city. These include:

- » *Easterfest*. Started in 1999, this music festival has grown to become the largest music gospel event in Australia, with over 40 000 attending each year. It's become a major tourist attraction for Toowoomba, bringing commercial benefit to the city. This event is widely supported by all the churches in Toowoomba and concludes each year with a combined service attended by thousands.
- » *City Women*. A network of passionate women whose goal is to see other women in the city realise their full God-intended potential, City Women includes *Bella*, a magazine for teenage girls, mentoring groups, pregnancy support, forums in schools, camps, and harm-prevention strategies.
- » *Family Week*. An initiative started by a small group of community leaders who wanted to strengthen family life in their city, the goal of Family Week is for businesses, clubs or individuals to organise an initiative, activity or event that recognises the importance of families. Over the last five years, Family Week has enjoyed amazing support from the Toowoomba community, with thousands of people participating in activities and events across the city.
- » *Emu Gully*. An adventure education facility that sees thousands of

young people from across Australia attending courses each year; the goal of the founder, Barry Rodgers, was to develop leadership qualities amongst young people, which he achieves by introducing them to lessons learnt from those who have served in the Australian Defence Force.

EIGHT

Kingdom fruit is more than evangelism

*God's Kingdom will be handed to a people . . .
who will live out a Kingdom life.
– Matt 21:43*

Recently, I had the opportunity to preach on the Kingdom in my local church. As part of this message, I referred to the warning from Jesus that if we don't produce the fruit of the Kingdom, then God will take the Kingdom from us and give it to someone else who *is* being productive for the Kingdom (Matt 21:43).

It follows that for us to be effective for the Kingdom, we need to know what is Kingdom fruit and how can we produce it. In response to this message, I had an interesting talk with my friend Mark Darling. Mark has worked as a psychologist who specialises in neurofeedback therapy for Autism Spectrum conditions. Neurofeedback is a non-invasive, painless and fun therapy for children on the Spectrum, which is based on complex

scientific processes. Mark's dedication to this field of study was initiated by the journey he and Kym have walked with their son Nathan.

He has seen amazing results with families that have been torn apart by trying to cope with children suffering from these conditions. But despite these great results, Mark made this comment: "And yet the little voice keeps asking, what's the point of all of this if they don't actually get saved and become Christians?"

So here's the rub: what is Kingdom fruit?

The fruit of the Kingdom is God's will being done on earth as it is in Heaven. Therefore, the question becomes: what is God's will? Is it to restore individuals into a meaningful relationship with their Creator based on repentance and faith in Christ? Yes. Is it to bring hope to a broken world in terms of restoration, forgiveness, justice and compassion? Yes. So is Mark producing the fruit of the Kingdom? Yes.

When asked to explain how we should fulfil the great commandment to love our neighbour, Jesus used the illustration of the Good Samaritan. Nowhere in this story is there the suggestion that seeing the wounded man saved is the measure by which fulfilment of the commandment will be measured. The ministry of Jesus is summarised in Acts in that he went about doing good and healing those who were oppressed (Acts 10:38).

While it's always possible to swing towards social action and to neglect an emphasis on evangelism, it's wrong, I believe, to say that those who promote

THE FRUIT OF
THE KINGDOM
IS GOD'S WILL
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justice, healing, compassion and mercy from a Christian perspective are not reflecting the heart of God and thus not producing the fruit of the Kingdom. As they do this they are sowing seeds of hope and salvation that will, in many cases, turn people's hearts towards encountering for themselves the reality of a personal relationship with the King of the Kingdom.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Let's produce the fruit of the Kingdom in all its expressions.

ILLUSTRATION

Let's produce the fruit of the Kingdom in all its expressions

A fine example of this holistic approach to the gospel is found in the life of the missionary William Carey, who spent 41 years in India and is often called the father of modern missions. Carey had a very rounded approach to his mission to India during the 1790s and into the new century.

His biographers, Ruth and Vishal Mangalwadi, describe how Carey put a lot of effort into translating and printing scriptures because he understood that individuals first needed to repent and know Christ, that personal transformation was the prerequisite to family and societal transformation.¹

Carey and his colleagues translated the entire Bible into India's major languages: Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese and Sanskrit, and parts of 209 other languages and dialects. He and the Marshmans founded Serampore College in 1818, a divinity school for Indians, which today offers theological and liberal arts education for some 2500 students.

However, Carey did not stop there. The Mangalwadis describe how he got involved in education, scientific advancement, social reform, literacy projects, healthcare, media, and also in business and industry. He was involved in bringing innovation and new technology into the weaving, printing and forestry industries, and he started the first savings banks.

They conclude that Carey did more for the transformation of the Indian subcontinent in the 19th and 20th centuries than any other individual before or since. Carey's life challenges us to take the gospel into every corner of our communities – to see entire cultures transformed for Christ.

NINE

Every Christian should be an agent for the Kingdom

*What we can and must do in the present . . .
is to build for the Kingdom.
– Tom Wright*

Jesus often used parables to illustrate how the Kingdom operates. As my friend Darrow Miller says, these parables are like a time bomb that sometimes takes a while to explode in our thinking, because our paradigms are determined by non-Kingdom presuppositions.

In Matthew 13, Jesus used a parable of seed being sown in the ground to explain the first part of his strategy to grow the Kingdom. He begins by sowing the word of the Kingdom into the hearts of men and women. Some respond to this message, and their hearts are changed so that the Kingdom of God begins to be demonstrated in their lives (Matt 13:8). In the second part of this chapter, another part of this strategy is revealed through the parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matt 13:24–43).

It's a well-known parable: a man owned a field and sowed seed in the field, expecting a harvest. But his enemy sowed some weeds in an attempt to spoil the harvest. The interesting part of this parable is the interpretation Jesus gives to his disciples when they ask him about it at the end of the day. Jesus says the one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man – himself. The field is the world and it belongs to Jesus. The seed this time is the children of the Kingdom. The enemy is the evil one.

So let's apply this to our day. The world belongs to Jesus, not to Satan. To bring the Kingdom into the world, Jesus will plant his people all over the globe in order to produce the Kingdom. Some may be planted in the church, but most of His people will be planted in the darkness and dirt of the world. To produce the fruit of the Kingdom, they will go through the process of death working in them to produce life in others. There is an enemy trying to stop this from happening. He doesn't own the field, but he will try to disrupt the Kingdom being produced.

Jesus owns the seed and can plant us where he wants. He plants us strategically where there is the need and the opportunity for the Kingdom to make a difference. Our responsibility is to produce the Kingdom where he has planted us. God is sovereign, but we are responsible. One of the most challenging features of the Kingdom is that God expects fruit. God is serious about the Kingdom. He will take it away from us and give it to somebody else who will produce the fruit, because the main game is to see the Kingdom being established on the earth. Each of us will have to give an account of the fruit we produce where God has planted us.

EACH OF US WILL HAVE
TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF
THE FRUIT WE PRODUCE
WHERE GOD HAS
PLANTED US.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Produce the Kingdom where God has planted you.

ILLUSTRATION

Produce the Kingdom where God has planted you

Often God uses the circumstances of our lives to plant us in a part of his field – the world – where we can produce fruit for the Kingdom out of the pain we have experienced and the lessons we have learnt. This principle is clearly demonstrated in the life of Bronwen Healy.

Bronwen grew up in a stable home, went to a good school and then on to university, but fell into bad company and eventually became a heroin addict. This drug dependency led Bronwen into prostitution to pay for her addiction. For several years, she was caught in this web of pain and degradation. Bronwen then had a miraculous encounter with Christ, and her life was redeemed back into God's purpose for her existence.

Now she runs a ministry called the Hope Foundation, which seeks to bring hope and salvation to women who are victims of the sex trade or addiction.¹ Hope Foundation offers connection groups for women, and practical and spiritual support for women in crisis. They have developed a drop-in centre called Hope Haven, which is a safe place for the women they are connecting with.

Hope Foundation is also developing a school program called Every Choice has Consequences, which seeks to empower young people to make positive choices and to resist the destructive path of addiction, thereby reinforcing their understanding of their worth, significance and ability to bring something unique and valuable to their world.

Bronwen has been invited to Australian Parliament House to share her views on drugs and prostitution, and to many schools and churches in Australia and internationally. She is the author of *Trophy of Grace*, which accounts her life and rehabilitation from drug addiction and the sex industry. She's truly a lady producing the fruit of the Kingdom.

In summary, we have set out eight key components of the Kingdom, and eight practical steps they require from us:

KINGDOM PRINCIPLE	APPLICATION
Kingdom is the sovereign rule of God.	God's will is to be expressed in every sphere of life.
Kingdom is a present reality.	Kingdom living is about what happens here and now in the context of eternal realities.
The Kingdom is more than the church.	Let's make Sunday relevant to Monday.
Awareness of the Kingdom is within every person.	Look for 'connecting points' amongst those you work with and relate to.
Kingdom happens outside church meetings.	Look for the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing the way for the Kingdom to advance in your sphere of activity.
Kingdom is expressed in a variety of passions.	Be passionate about your call to express the Kingdom, and acknowledge and validate the different passions God has given to others to express the Kingdom.
Kingdom fruit is more than evangelism.	Produce the fruit of the Kingdom in all its expressions.
Every Christian should be an agent for the Kingdom.	Demonstrate the Kingdom where God has planted you.

PART TWO

Living the Kingdom

TEN

What happens when we rediscover
the Kingdom?

*If Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God is true,
then everything must change.*

– Justine from Burundi

In the film *The Matrix*, Thomas Anderson (Keanu Reeves) is offered two pills. Once taken, the red one, he is told, will change forever the way he looks at the world. While it may seem a strange analogy, this is what it is like when you see the Kingdom. Your view of the world changes, and you can't go back to the way you were. This is what it means to rediscover the Kingdom.

Seeing the Kingdom can realign our theology to a more Biblical perspective. Let us consider some key doctrines and how they're commonly perceived, against what I would suggest is a more accurate description based on a Kingdom perspective.

DOCTRINE	POPULAR VIEW	KINGDOM VIEW
Salvation	My relationship with God in the present and going to Heaven in the future	The work of salvation is about whole human beings, not just 'souls'; about present, not just the future; what God does through us, not just what he does in us and for us.
Gospel	Individual salvation, home in Heaven	Kingdom has come to the earth; God's salvation, redemption, wholeness and healing can change individuals, communities and nations.
Resurrection	Guarantee of eternal life	Inauguration of the Kingdom happened within our world, so its implications and effects are to be felt within our world; what you do with your body in the present matters.
Ministry of the Holy Spirit	Exercised in church meetings	Equips us to be agents for transformation of this earth.
Kingdom of God	Heaven, our future hope	God's rule, which is to be given practical expression in the world.

Joseph Mattera outlines how a Kingdom perspective changes the way we look at the world, our faith and our responsibility as Christians in the world.¹

1. We understand that being born again is not about going to Heaven, but about having our eyes opened so that we finally see the Lordship of Christ over all the earth as King of Kings (read John 3:3–6).
2. We understand John 3:16 as not just God loving individual sinners, but sending His Son to redeem the created order. (The word 'world' in the Greek is 'cosmos', which is the system of the created order.) Thus, God wants us as His Kingdom people to apply the Bible to economics and public policy, not just to prayer and the fruit of the Spirit.
3. The ministry gifts found in Ephesians 4:11 are seen as equipping the

saints for the work of the ministry in the marketplace to fill up all things, not just for church ministry.

4. We shift from a platonic/dualistic approach to life, in which we erroneously believe that God only values spiritual things, to a holistic approach in which we value the material world as well.
5. There is a movement towards incarnation in which we not only 'march for Jesus' but we 'move in' for Jesus and immerse ourselves in our communities, not just our churches. We should serve our cities with our marketplace callings as ministers of the Kingdom, not just serve God on Sundays in church buildings.
6. The church is to nurture apostles of government, law, economics and education, not just ecclesial elders involved in church government, church by-laws, tithes and offerings, and nurturing Sunday School teachers.
7. We understand and view Jesus as the King of the earth, not just as the Head of the Body of Christ.
8. We understand that the church is not the totality of the Kingdom but is the primary agent of the Kingdom as salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16).
9. We are to labour not only for revival but societal reformation, because revival brings people into the church and reformation places believers in societal leadership.
10. We now understand that the Bible is not really a book about Heaven, but a book about God's people stewarding the earth.

Seeing the Kingdom changes the way we look at the world. For many Christians, the world is a hostile place, and they are grateful they are only 'passing through' on their way to Heaven. The Bible talks about the world in a different manner. In the Kingdom parables, Jesus describes Himself as the owner of the world (Matt 13:36–38). After the resurrection, Jesus declares

that all authority in Heaven and earth is now His (Matt 28:18–20). Paul adds that the world is the inheritance of the seed of Abraham (Rom 4:13). So rather than feeling uncomfortable in the world, Christians should affirm the earth is the Lord's (Ps 24:1) and should be about bringing the Kingdom of God into every expression of human existence on this planet.

To add to this negative view of the world, many Christians believe we are living in the last days. When you add a sense of alienation from the world to a confidence the world will end soon, it's only logical that solely immediate mission objectives like evangelism and church planting are worth pursuing. Other considerations are both a waste of time and counterproductive to the promotion of the gospel. In fact, some go so far as to say working for community transformation could delay the second coming.

To my mind, a Kingdom perspective is different. Irrespective of their eschatology, a Kingdom person thinks and plans long term. They are concerned about future generations and the legacy we are leaving to our children and grandchildren. They see the earth as a realm that can experience the redemptive power of God's grace, so they work to see this realised. They don't do this in an unrealistic, utopian way, but in an intentional, focused application of the principles of the Kingdom.

“If its leaders think and act in the right way, the church has the opportunity to become a landmark for communities in constant change. We have the opportunity – indeed, the responsibility – to develop strategies that will move entire communities forward in a positive and godly direction. By building strategic, future-engaging cultures of hope in our churches, we can shape the direction of communities and entire cities.”²

This long-term perspective means that as Kingdom people we will be concerned about and active in issues that may take generations to resolve. Some of these global issues are outlined in the eight Millennium Development Goals, to which we could add the fight against slavery.

- » Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
- » Achieving universal primary education
- » Promoting gender equality and empowering women
- » Reducing child mortality rates
- » Improving maternal health
- » Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- » Ensuring environmental sustainability
- » Developing a global partnership for development
- » Removing all forms of slavery

Recently, I heard a presentation by Scott Todd, who is Chairman of the board of directors of Accord, North America's largest network of Christian relief and development organisations. Todd makes the point that 52 per cent of the world's population suffered from extreme poverty just 30 years ago, but that number has been halved to 26 per cent in one generation. He believes ending extreme poverty is not only possible, but actually probable in our lifetime. Todd works with an alliance of Christian groups under the umbrella name '58' – as in Isaiah 58, the Old Testament chapter that compels the righteous to loosen the chains of injustice, free the oppressed, and give shelter to the wanderer and food to the hungry. Project 58 declares that eradicating poverty is not only possible but is probable, if the people of the church make this goal a project they actively support.³

These types of Kingdom initiatives are motivating younger Christians around the world. By 'Kingdom' they don't mean the Christian conquest of society, but rather the divine ideal of something closer to Heaven here on earth – a world in which the most vulnerable are protected and the poorest are fed and clothed. One example of this Kingdom perspective is the website *Q: Ideas for the Common Good*, which believes that inherent in Christian faithfulness is the responsibility to create a better world, one

that reflects God's original design and intention. Q was birthed out of Gabe Lyons' vision to see Christians, especially leaders, recover a vision for their historic responsibility to renew and restore cultures, which is inspired by Chuck Colson's statement, "Christians are called to redeem entire cultures, not just individuals."⁴

Rediscovering the Kingdom has powerful consequences in the way we view our responsibility as Christians in the world. It helps us understand that God loves the world – not just the individuals within it, but all that the world represents. Our role as His people in the world is to help create a better world that comes closer to reflecting the heart and character of God. This means we will plan and think long term, and that our efforts will be broad based across all the issues that challenge God's will being done on the earth.

SEEING THE
KINGDOM
CHANGES THE
WAY WE LOOK
AT THE WORLD.

ELEVEN

What does it mean for
church leaders?

*We cannot continue to do the same old things . . .
and expect a different result.*

– Eric Swanson

You can always tell a Kingdom-minded church leader. They see the big picture of what God wants to do in the earth. They don't fight for their part. They value the whole Body of Christ, they're humble, and they believe God is able to impact all of life.

Given that much of Christian thinking equates the Kingdom with the church, the implications of rediscovering the Kingdom for church leaders is very direct. If the Kingdom is bigger than the church, then what happens on Monday is just as important – if not more so – than what happens on Sunday. Church leaders have the responsibility to equip and support their people to be effective on Monday. This doesn't mean that it's wrong for the church to have its own sense of vision for reaching the community, but to only focus on what the local church

can do is to miss the bigger picture of how individual Christians from within that congregation can impact all of the spheres within the community.

For many church leaders, this requires a major paradigm shift from the way they have been taught and trained. Let's illustrate the extent of this paradigm shift for church leaders by comparing a Kingdom mindset and a church mindset.¹

KINGDOM MINDSET	KINGDOM VIEW
A Kingdom mindset releases all saints as ministers in the marketplace.	A church mindset trains people to serve in a church building on Sundays.
A Kingdom mindset creates wealth to transform a community and nation.	A church mindset motivates giving to build our own church programs.
A Kingdom mindset is a holistic approach that integrates the gospel with politics, economics and public policy.	A church mindset insulates the gospel from politics and public policy.
A Kingdom mindset views the Bible as a blueprint to structure every aspect of society.	A church mindset views the Bible merely as a pietistic book that enables us to escape the world, enter Heaven, and be spiritual.
A Kingdom mindset trains people for all of life.	A church mindset trains people only for church life.
A Kingdom mindset nurtures leaders who are world changers and 'cultural creatives' who articulate truth to society.	A church mindset nurtures leaders who speak religious language relevant only to church people.
A Kingdom mindset speaks of the rule of God over the entire created order.	A church mindset speaks of the rule of God through deacons and elders over those in a church congregation.
With a Kingdom mindset, pastors release their people to their vocational callings in the marketplace.	A church mindset controls people by marginalising their marketplace callings and emphasising only their Sunday ministries.

KINGDOM MINDSET	KINGDOM VIEW
Churches with a Kingdom mindset equip 100 per cent of the saints to fill up all things in every realm of life (Ephesians 4:10–12).	Those with a church mindset have as their primary goal to equip the 2 to 3 per cent of the congregation called to be full-time church pastors, ministers and missionaries.

Building on this idea of a paradigm shift for church leaders, Eric Swanson has compiled a list of ten changes in focus for church leaders in terms of the priorities they set for their leadership role and how they view success. Swanson comments:

“There is a growing awareness that we cannot continue to do the same old things and expect a different result. If we want to be the salt and light we as the church were created to be, we have to do something different . . . we have to be something different! Community transformation is not found in programs, strategies, campaigns or tactics. For most of us, it will take nothing less than a shift of seismic proportions in what the church is to be in the 3rd millennium. A paradigm is a model consisting of shared assumptions regarding what works or what is true. A paradigm shift is that ‘aha!’ moment when one sees things in such a new light that one can never go back to the old ways again. Each paradigm shift takes us from a model of thinking that we must discard to a new model that we must embrace. A new paradigm is the new wineskins that will be needed to hold the new assumptions about what is true. To maximise our impact on our communities – urban, suburban or rural, we need changes in at least ten of our paradigms of how we currently view church.”²

Here is a summary of ten paradigm changes Swanson believes leaders need to make.

1. **From building walls to building bridges.** “You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:13,14). The first paradigm shift pertains to where we, as the church, see ourselves in relation to our communities. Will we remain outside of the community inviting people in, or will we go to our communities seeking to be a transforming agent? The church is called to be separate in lifestyle but never called to be isolated from the people it seeks to influence.
2. **From measuring attendance to measuring impact.** “The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast . . . mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.” (Matthew 13:33). In a post-modern world most people are neither impressed with the size of a church nor its commitment to ‘truth’. When Jesus chose one passage to describe his mission and ministry, he picked up the scroll of Isaiah and read from Isaiah 61: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners . . . to comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair . . .” The way he ‘preached’ best was by holistically combining proclaiming with comforting and providing. This is how Jesus did ministry. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” (John 1:14). Likewise, the apostle Paul was as “eager to remember the poor” (Galatians 2:10) as he was “eager to preach the gospel” (Romans 1:15–17). Effective ministry has always been holistic, combining good deeds with good news (Acts 10:36–38).
3. **From encouraging the saints to attend the service to equipping the saints for works of service.** “It is [God] who gave some to be . . . pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service . . .” (Ephesians 4:11,12). In the typical church, lay people are asked to serve in five or six capacities:

- » Teach a Sunday School class.
- » Work in the nursery.
- » Lead a home Bible study or small group.
- » Sing in the choir.
- » Be an usher or greeter.
- » Serve on a board or committee.

Little wonder pastors lament that only 20 per cent of their members are ‘active’. Could it be that the service opportunities are not broad enough to engage the energies and passions of people in the church?

4. **From ‘serve us’ to service – from inward to outward focus.** “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give . . .” (Mark 10:45). Several years ago, Chuck Colson made the observation that when the Communists took over Russia in 1917, they did not make Christianity illegal. Their constitution, in fact, did guarantee freedom of religion. But what they did make illegal was for the church to do any ‘good works’. No longer could the church fulfil its historic role in feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, housing the orphan, educating children or caring for the sick. What was the result? Seventy years later, the church was totally irrelevant to the communities in which it dwelt. What Lenin did by diabolic design, most churches have done by default. But the result is identical. Church is irrelevant to most people. Take away service and you take away the church’s power, influence and evangelistic effectiveness. The power of the gospel is combining the life-changing message with selfless service.
5. **From duplication of human services and ministries to partnering with existing services and ministries.** “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9). Nearly every community has a number of human service agencies that

are morally positive and spiritually neutral, which are doing their best to meet the needs of the under-served and under-resourced people of the community. Such agencies include the local food bank, homeless shelter, emergency family housing, and safe houses for abused women, etc. Equally true, there are church and parachurch ministries that are effective in ministering to specific target audiences (business community, youth, college students, etc.). Rather than starting a new ministry, why not form partnerships with existing groups as 'partner ministries' of a local congregation? Chances are that people from your congregation are already serving in many of these organisations. Why not use the current community energy to create synergy?

6. **From fellowship to functional unity.** There is a strong case to suggest that there is really only one church in a city or community (made up of all believers) that meets in several congregations around the city. In Philippians 2:2, Paul implored, ". . . make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." Only unity of purpose around the vision of a transformed community is strong enough to unite pastors and churches of different denominations.
7. **From condemning the city to blessing the city and praying for it.** Jeremiah 29 begins by saying, "This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem . . . to those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon." What follows are instructions on how to live as aliens in a foreign land. Listen to his admonition: "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (v. 7). For too long, we as the church have positioned ourselves as adversaries to our communities. The monolithic church has stood from afar and lobbed in pontifical salvos, condemning the city and those who are trying to serve it. Maybe it's time we began blessing the city by blessing those who have given themselves to the city!

8. **From being a minister in a congregation to being a minister in a parish.** "As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it . . ." (Luke 19:41). A congregation is made up of people who attend a local church from a community. The minister typically feels that this congregation is his flock, whom he must baptise, marry and bury. They consume his time and energy. Being in a parish is different. A parish differs from a congregation in that it is a geographical scope of concern and responsibility. A congregation is a subset of a parish. So what difference does that make? Being in a parish gives one the God-given right to minister to anyone in the community, whether they are part of one's congregation or not.
9. **From anecdote and speculation to valid information.** Two pieces of information changed the course of Nehemiah's life and resulted in the transformation of a community. In Nehemiah 1, Nehemiah learnt that the walls and gates of Jerusalem were broken down and her people were in great distress. These two pieces of accurate information were catalytic to Nehemiah's prayers and plans to restore a broken wall and a broken people. His burden to transform the city came from accurate information. We too need correct information about the real needs of our community, as well as the resources we have to meet those needs. Do we know the demographic information of our community? Do we know the number of churches? Do we know the spiritual history of our community?
10. **From teacher to learner.** "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak . . ." (James 1:19). The effective churches see the community as one that is full of assets more than full of problems. Over 90 per cent of urban congregations provide social services, from preschools to prison ministries, from food pantries to health clinics, from literacy programs to day-care centres, etc. Suburban congregations have much to learn from these innovative leaders and ministries.

Once a church leader sees the Kingdom, they will realise the incredible opportunity and responsibility they have as leaders to encourage their people to be agents of the Kingdom in every sphere of society.

While called to lead and develop the ministry of their local churches, local church leaders will at the same time recognise that people in their congregations will influence people and spheres the local church could never reach.

Rather than unsettle a church leader, this should inspire them to realise that even if they have a small church, the influence of a community of believers can be profound. What an exciting prospect! Their challenge will be how to balance their enthusiasm to develop the vision for their local church with the recognition that the Kingdom is expressed and advancing in spheres outside what the local church is doing. A Kingdom leader will encourage their people to pursue these expressions of being about the Father's business.

THERE IS A GROWING
AWARENESS THAT WE
CANNOT CONTINUE
TO DO THE SAME OLD
THINGS AND EXPECT
A DIFFERENT RESULT.

TWELVE

How do we apply the Kingdom?

*In every field of human endeavor we find God . . .
involved, revealed and glorified.*

– Graham Buxton

As we realise the scope of the Kingdom and its potential to bring transformation to our communities, the question arises: how is this going to happen? God is the Creator and sovereign Lord over all. His redemptive agenda encompasses all of creation. And by His grace, God has uniquely gifted each Christ-follower to participate with Him in this grand redemptive work in a particular domain of society.

When speaking of 'domains of society', we are drawing upon a rich vein of Christian thought that has been powerfully articulated in modern times by Dutch statesman Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper taught the concept of Sphere Sovereignty, where each sphere (sector, domain) of life was established by God with its own integrity, distinct responsibilities, competence, and realm

of authority.¹ The three foundational spheres are: the family, the church and the civil government. Beyond these, the domains include agriculture, health, education, and others.

No one domain is to be sovereign over another. The church is not to rule over families, nor the state, or vice versa. Kuyper based his thinking on the Biblical concept of the sovereignty of God over all creation – an idea that is encapsulated in the Latin phrase *Coram Deo*, which became a rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation. Every part of human life exists equally and directly ‘before the face of God’, and exists to show forth His glory.

Here is a list of domains within our community which, while not complete or fully inclusive, gives an overview of the concept we are developing.²

FAMILY

Marriage, childhood development, parenting, extended family.

CHURCH

Religious institutions and organisations.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Law and justice, public policy, politics, military.

EDUCATION

Schools, universities, academy, educational organisations.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Journalism, telecommunication, writing, public speaking.

ARTS

Music, poetry, painting, sculpting, dance, theatre, film, graphic arts.

ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION

Competitive sport, camping, hiking, etc.

BUSINESS, COMMERCE AND ECONOMICS

Trade, enterprise, entrepreneurship, finance.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Natural sciences, social sciences, mathematics.

HEALTH

Medical, public health, sanitation, pharmacology.

SOCIAL AND NON-PROFIT

Civic organisations, societies, community development.

AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION

Environment, land management, forestry, horticulture, ranching.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Applied science, engineering, utilities, transportation, design, construction.

In her excellent book *The Old Testament Template*, Landa Cope outlines a Biblical vocational mission mandate for each of these domains.³

FAMILY

To provide a safe, loving and nurturing environment for the growth and education of the next generation.

CHURCH

To spread the faith, to disciple all believers in applying God’s word to the work and walk of faith.

GOVERNMENT

To provide an independent and objective source of arbitration and conflict resolution.

EDUCATION

To develop the God-given gifts in every person to their highest potential in the service of their community.

MEDIA

To provide truthful, objective information so that citizens can make informed decisions.

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

To provide for rest, relaxation and renewal of the soul through beauty and joy.

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

To provide needed goods and services and gainful employment opportunities at a fair market price and wage.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

To discover and use God's natural laws to pursue a higher quality of life, better health, and greater stewardship of God's resources.

So we're saying the application of the Kingdom of God message is that God's will can be expressed in each of these domains. We are not suggesting this will lead to a perfect society, because Jesus himself made it clear that while we are sowing good seed, our enemy is at work seeking to counter and undermine the effect of the good seed (Matt 13:24–43). Jesus said this struggle would continue to the end of this age.

However, what Jesus did teach is that the Kingdom can make a difference in the world in which we live now, not just be a hope for the future. As we've noted, he talked about Christians being the only salt and light for our communities; and as well, in his parables, Jesus talked about the leaven leavening the whole loaf (Matt 13:33) and the mustard seed growing into a tree that impacts the world around it (Matt 13:31–32).

So while we don't believe in some utopian ideal, we do believe that the practice of the Kingdom can and will make a difference in our world, making it a better place, thus reflecting the nature and character of God.

“We are invited to value and rejoice in our humanity as an expression of the reality of the Kingdom of God, whether that is in the enjoyment of God's creation, expressing ourselves in music and the arts, scientific exploration, fulfilling our vocation in politics or business, or in any of the many other dimensions of human living bestowed upon the human race. In every field of human endeavor we also find God involved, revealed and glorified. There is no distinction in the Kingdom between the chapel and the concert hall.”⁴

*WE DO BELIEVE
THAT THE PRACTICE
OF THE KINGDOM
CAN AND WILL MAKE
A DIFFERENCE IN
OUR WORLD.*

If God is involved, revealed and glorified in every field of human endeavour, then our opportunity is to discover this reality for our own lives and the calling we are seeking to fulfil. To be effective for the Kingdom in each of these spheres will require faith, perseverance, skill, training, courage and, hopefully, the support of pastors who recognise their people are taking the Kingdom into places that a church leader could never go. Pastors don't have to fully understand the way these domains work, but they certainly can play a significant part in encouraging and equipping their people to be effective where God has planted them.

As an example of this new way of thinking, let's consider how the Kingdom of God can be applied in some of the domains we have listed.

Applying the Kingdom as a professional

In India, a group of Christian leaders who work with university students have been looking at ways to actively relate their faith to the various professions being entered into by these young people. Their vision: ‘Developing leaders in each discipline, who will be making redemptive influence in their respective disciplines, in the society and in making policies, which will have global impact.’⁵

They begin with a statement of mission that includes the following positions:

- » Each one has to reconcile to God as a whole person.
- » Men and women are to get reconciled to God as community.
- » Reconciliation of all things or redemption of all things is essential to fulfil the purpose of creation.
- » All things include various aspects of creation, both visible and invisible.

These things are being researched, explained and studied under various disciplines:

- Science and technology/agriculture, medical, engineering.
- Arts and communication/media, culture, sociology, education.
- Politics, law and governance/legislature, judiciary, executive.
- Economics, business, commerce/market.

Students spend maximum time concentrating on the above studies and work without realising that they are involved in God's world and God's mission in reconciling all things.

Our life and activities should be for fulfilling the purpose of creation – reconciliation, perfect harmony, and development – not just for human survival or comfort, but also for the whole creation. Not just my personal salvation – life after death – but life with God at present, to reflect his character and represent his concerns.

Then our personal ambition will be to redeem the area that we specify in or identify with, or which we are interested in, called to or focused on.

This further helps us to have the vision and desire required to make a redemptive impact by positioning ourselves in influential roles. This enables us to be focused, hard-working and excellent, and to meaningfully and credibly testify the truth of redemption through words and deeds.

It means students choosing their subjects and studying, visioning,

dreaming and planning with a redemptive and new creation perspective. This approach helps them to excel in their studies and position themselves strategically. Young people are encouraged to choose their career/vocation accordingly – not just for money or survival – and to select their job location looking at the need of the place and people; not by prioritising their comfort zone, but by focusing on the most vulnerable, marginalised, oppressed, exploited, poor and disabled, as they are close to God's heart. Once in their profession, they should take every opportunity to make a redemptive impact, rather than being opportunistic.

Before they begin their working lives, these young people seek to apply the following questions to their particular profession or discipline:

- » *Creation.* What would be the original intention or the primary motive for my particular discipline from the perspective of the Creator who is the source of all knowledge? God's perspective is sought on the subject, which is derived from the study of His revealed word.
- » *Fall.* What are the distortions or falsehoods which have become part of my discipline as a consequence of the Fall? What are the developments that are leading to a negative impact on society? What are the burning issues that merit our attention?
- » *Redemption.* How can my discipline be reconciled to the purposes of God and serve His Kingdom? What could be a possible vision statement for my discipline that reflects the purposes of God? What solutions can we offer to the burning issues? What is the redemptive understanding of my chosen discipline?

Applying the Kingdom of God in business

I have become involved in this area through some interesting personal experiences. From my late teens I had worked in the church as a pastor and then spent many years working in a parachurch organisation. Up until my late 40s, my world centred on church and Christian organisational activity.

Then, through some difficult personal circumstances, my focus changed and I found myself starting an Internet business out of necessity. My family and friends will tell you this was crazy on two accounts: first, I knew nothing about business; and second, I knew even less about the Internet.

Seven years later I'm still running this business, which in itself is a miracle. This experience has been very helpful for me in terms of understanding how different the business world is to the world of church and Christian organisations. It has helped me to grow a deeper appreciation for the amazing passion and skill God gives to people who build and develop successful and influential businesses. I recognise that this drive and ability comes from God, and that the results are an evidence of the Kingdom at work in the marketplace.

So, with my heart to promote the Kingdom message and my limited experience in business, I have become involved in developing a Business as Mission (BAM) course within our local context in Australia. Our goal is to inspire a new generation of business entrepreneurs to be about their Father's business (Luke 2:49).

While there may be some variations on what this term 'business as mission' means to me, it's simple.⁶ Our mission as Christians is to see the Kingdom of God come to earth. This means God will call and equip people to go into business and all the other domains to demonstrate the nature and the principles of the Kingdom. This calling is equally as valid and important as someone who is called to serve in church ministry or overseas mission.⁷ Christian business people are in business not just to supply money to the church or mission groups; they're there to express their God-given calling and, by doing so, to extend the influence of the Kingdom within the sphere they're active in.

Business as Mission is about real, viable, sustainable and profitable businesses with a Kingdom of God purpose, perspective and impact, leading to transformation of people and societies spiritually, economically, socially and environmentally, to the greater glory of God.

Looking at business in this way requires a major shift in thinking for many Christians. For many Christian communities, business is irrevocably tainted, the working life is not valued, and a common view is held that if you want to really serve God, the best thing you can do is to give up business and do something more 'spiritual'.

Ken Costa has been an investment banker for over 30 years and presently serves as Vice-Chairman of UBS Investment Bank. In his excellent book *God at Work*, he makes this statement: "If the Christian faith is not relevant in the workplace, it is not relevant at all."⁸ A big claim to make, but clearly true. The Kingdom of God is an integrated view of life – its principles apply in every area of human endeavour. Costa goes on to say, "We will only take our faith to work if we know our work is valuable to God."⁹ Rediscovering the Kingdom includes a realignment of our view of work.

Here is a summary of what the Bible has to say about work:

- » God is a worker.
- » He created men and women to be workers.
- » He created them to be co-workers with God.
- » Work came before the Fall – it is not a result of the Fall. The Fall has made the context in which we work more challenging – corruption, greed, injustice.
- » Working with God has great significance and value.
- » Work is much more than paid employment. Painting the house, getting lunches ready for the children, helping out with a Red Cross appeal – all of this is work. This means that those of us who are unemployed can still work; those of us who are not paid can still work. It also means that much of our time outside of paid employment is work.

The following is a summary of what the Bible has to say about why and how we should work.

Why work?

- » Economic – to create wealth.
- » Financial – to support oneself and a family.
- » Personal – to experience fulfilment and significance.
- » Social – to avoid being a burden on others.
- » Relational – to support other people through cooperative effort.

How to work:

- » With excellence and skill.
- » With ethics and integrity.
- » With generosity and a servant heart.
- » With thoughtfulness for those we meet through work.
- » With concern for justice in the workplace.

So how do we apply Kingdom theology to the area of business?

- » The passion and the skill to be good at business come from God.
- » Responding to God's call to enter business requires the same level of faith, obedience and dependence on God as it does to enter into any area of God's calling.
- » Christian business needs to be profitable, viable, sustainable and ethical.
- » Christian business is not solely about making money to build the church or support missions.
- » Christian business in and of itself is a Kingdom activity that can transform individuals and communities spiritually, economically, socially and environmentally.

- » Business people can exercise Kingdom effectiveness in a wide range of activities: philanthropy, social action, change of the marketplace, and political influence.

Applying the Kingdom of God in public policy

In Australia, a new initiative called the Lachlan Macquarie Internship has been launched to foster a greater appreciation of the relevance of a Christian worldview to public policy.¹⁰ This course is offered selectively to high-achieving, post-tertiary Christians considering careers in areas with influence on public policy. It aims to give them a foundational understanding of the intersection between religion and politics in Australia before they go into public life.

The goal of this program is the transformation of the nature of politics and governance in Australia. By helping develop the character and intellectual foundations of future politicians, advisors and public policy influencers before they begin their careers, this internship aims to assist values-based decision making. The aim is also to present a diversity of views that move across party lines and political philosophies.

Topics covered include:

- » Biblical foundations for culture, society and politics
- » Historical traditions and development
- » Modern political thought
- » Religion and politics in the Australian context.

By providing an academic and creative environment in which to grow in knowledge of history, theology, law, politics and Australian culture, participants of diverse political persuasions will enter the political realm with a more robust motivation and purpose. The goal is to develop leaders with the spiritual, intellectual and professional fortitude for public service.

It's likely many of the participants will end up working in the same

environment, so the brief experience of living and learning in a close community of faith could promote deep relationships that will contribute to a better and more productive environment in our often adversarial parliament. This, along with exposure to distinguished leaders in the public domain who exhibit Christ-like values and bearing, will encourage and better equip these future leaders to retain their integrity and effectiveness.

We can see from these three examples that the Kingdom of God can be applied in practical terms to every sphere of life. While the application will vary from domain to domain, the basic principles of the Kingdom will be present in each area. This is one of the key ways the Kingdom of God can come to the earth and God's will be done.

THIRTEEN

What does this mean for
you and me?

*It is living the Kingdom, being the Kingdom . . .
that will ultimately accomplish God's mandate.*

– Landa Cope

Theology is helpful, but unless it can be made practical, its value remains intellectual. Remember the words of Matt: “There’s got to be more than this.” Well, I hope from what he has read thus far that Matt will be encouraged to see there is more to his Christian life than faithfully attending his local church.

Being part of a local church is important. But it’s equally important for Matt to take his faith on a Monday and apply it to the sphere in which God has planted him. If he doesn’t believe he has found the right sphere, then Matt should seek God for His direction about where he should be planted.

In simple terms this means addressing the following questions.

What is the passion God has given you?

As we've discussed, the Kingdom of God is about passion. Passion leads to action. Consider the parable of the man who found the treasure in the field. He was filled with joy because he had discovered something he had been looking for: the Kingdom of God. So he sells all he owns and buys the field (Matt 13:44). We see here some important principles about living out the Kingdom.

- » Discovering the Kingdom brings passion (he was filled with joy).
- » Apprehending the Kingdom involves ingenuity (he hid what he had found).
- » Embracing the Kingdom involves total commitment (he sold all he had).
- » Pursuing the Kingdom involves seeing opportunities and taking risks (he then bought the land).

Think back to our friend Sarah, the lawyer, whose passion was to see justice and compassion come to her world. This passion drove her to study for many years to become equipped to work as a lawyer. I remember hearing a prominent Australian businesswoman, Wendy Simpson, answer the question "How can Christians influence society?" One of the first things she said is take the passion God has given you and become the most skillful exponent of your chosen profession. Wendy encouraged her audience to seek out godly mentors and to study others who were successful and see what made them so. In other words, being influential for the Kingdom depends on intentionality. This means having a goal, having a passion, and putting in the time and effort required to develop the potential God has put within you. As Proverbs states, God will give influence to those who excel in their skills (Proverbs 22:29).

Landa Cope expresses this vision for Kingdom impact when she writes:

"I see a generation who can articulate and apply God's view of civil justice, economics, science, education, family, the arts, communication and church ministry. I see a generation of

believers who grow up believing that what they love to do is a gift from God, and who desire with all their hearts to use these talents in the service of God and their community. I dream of young people all over the Christian world taking oaths to serve the Kingdom in their specific callings. And yes, I will say it, I dream of a generation who is willing to die for the Lord of justice, provision and freedom."¹

How has He equipped you in terms of personality, gifting and experience?

To be effective in the Kingdom, we need to know ourselves – both our strengths and our weaknesses. Paul says, "Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think but think so as to have sound judgment as God has allocated to each a measure of faith." (Rom 12:3).

Passion is one thing, but gifting is another. For example, you may be passionate about alleviating poverty, but your gifting may be to support a leader who is pioneering an organisation that is focused on this goal. Faith is linked to gifting. Some people have faith to build a successful business. They have an entrepreneurial gifting and a faith that is commensurate with this call.

"Holy people must stop going into 'church' work as their natural course of action and take up holy orders in farming, industry, law, education, banking, and journalism with the same zeal previously given to evangelism or to pastoral and missionary work."²

Nothing is more discouraging than trying to function as a square peg in a round hole. Sometimes we find ourselves in the wrong role because we're trying to fulfil someone else's expectation, or because we haven't taken the time to really understand ourselves and explore where it is that we can function best. If you can find your 'sweet spot', then you will do what you love and love

what you do. One way to find answers for our own lives is to avail ourselves of the expertise of people who have developed helpful resources – like the *Vocations 4 Life* program³ or the websites *Monday Church*⁴ and *Everything*⁵.

Where has He planted you or where does He want to plant you?

God's planting of us as Kingdom seed in the world (field) is very specific, both in terms of geography and vocation. To be effective in the Kingdom, we need to accept the place where God chooses to plant us. It may have challenges – it may seem dark, like the seed analogy from Matthew 13 – but to make a difference the seed has to go into the ground and die. Out of this process, life is produced and transformation takes place. This is where faith comes in. To overcome the challenges and to produce the fruit of the Kingdom takes tenacity and perseverance.

If you genuinely believe that you have not yet found the right place, don't be discouraged. Consider the story of Paul when he was trying to find God's direction while on his second missionary trip (Acts 16:6–9). It took Paul several failed attempts to discover the place where God wanted him to go. If Paul – the man with such mighty revelations from God – struggled to find God's specific will, then we shouldn't be hard on ourselves if we're having some difficulties finding the way. Be faithful where you are, seek direction, and then take the courage to step out. This new step may include a complete change of vocation and learning new skills, but where there is passion, faith and commitment, this can be an exciting journey.

What does it mean to produce the Kingdom in that sphere?

God's expectation for your life is directly linked to the passion and gifting He has given you. In the parable of the talents, Jesus makes it very clear that our point of responsibility is how we use the talents God has given us. The fact that someone else may have more or less talents than we have is irrelevant. We shall give an account for our portion of God's deposit and the return we have seen for this investment. Based on this understanding, we can

each develop our own vision for the place where God has called us to serve. The question to consider is: what would it mean for the Kingdom to come to this place?

This vision will be specific and will relate directly to your sphere of influence. For Bronwen from Hope Foundation, it means seeing young women set free from destructive lifestyle choices to pursue their God-given potential. For a young scientist, it might mean being part of a research team that finds the cure for cancer. For the entrepreneur, it might mean developing a business that can bring social transformation to poor communities. For the filmmaker, it might mean producing films that change the way people think and act. For the musician, it might mean writing and performing songs that turn the hearts of a generation towards the King of the Kingdom.

Whatever God has placed within your heart, go for it with all you have. Let's be part of the answer to the prayer "Your Kingdom, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

WHATEVER GOD
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HAVE.

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ABOUT

About Derek Brown

Derek Brown has a background in church leadership, publishing and leadership in the not-for-profit sector. He is the coordinator for Business as Mission training courses in Australia, runs an Internet marketing business called Using the Net and a website called Rediscovering the Kingdom. Derek lives with his daughter Samantha on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia.

Business as Mission

Business as Mission (BAM) is about building great businesses that demonstrate and advance the Kingdom of God. Based on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, BAM Australia runs several courses for people with a heart to serve God in business.

These include:

- » *7 day Intensive*, which is held twice a year in February and July
- » *Cert IV in Frontline Management*, which is an extension of the Intensive course
- » *BAM Internship Program*, a combination of the Intensive, Cert IV, workplace experience and mentoring.

For more details, visit the BAM website: www.businessasmission.com.au

Rediscovering the Kingdom

Rediscovering the Kingdom is a website with a variety of resources for those interested in learning more about the Kingdom of God.

These include:

- » articles on the Kingdom of God, the church and the Kingdom, the marketplace and community transformation
- » MP3s by Derek Brown and others on the Kingdom of God
- » monthly newsletter.

For more details, visit the Kingdom website: www.rediscoveringtheKingdom.info

