

Introduction:

A Practical Purpose: to help us together to actually walk in all of the things that we read in Scripture.

Everything (in the Bible) is true, real, accessible, and there's nothing on earth like it. Our task as teachers and speakers is to help us know that.

"Eternal Life Now" translates into "Easy Obedience"

- Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."
- If the yoke I'm wearing isn't easy and the burden isn't light, I've got the wrong yoke; the wrong burden.

The aim of following Christ is that we should come to the place where we routinely and easily walk in the character and power of Christ.

That's what it means for him to dwell in us and for us to surrender our lives to him.

Four Guiding Texts for the Whole Series

MATTHEW 6:33

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

- PSALM 23 – *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack anything.*
- It's a song of someone who not only sought the kingdom of God, but they had found it.

MATTHEW 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

- **This is Jesus's basic sermon.**
- "At-hand." The podium is "at-hand."
 - Check out the Greek -it's a completed action.
 - It has drawn nigh. *Not* that it's about to come.
- The kingdom of God has been around as long as God's been around.

Jesus made that kingdom available to everyone.

- The street address for the kingdom of the heavens before Jesus was the Jewish nation.



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- That doesn't mean it wasn't anywhere else but if you wanted to find it you came to the Jewish people, and their religion.
- Abraham and his children were given the special privilege of making it available to everyone who would come to it.

After Jesus comes, the kingdom of the heavens has a different street address:

- It's Jesus, and Jesus's people.
- Repent: *Metanoete* – think about your thinking. Get a new thought.
- What's the new thought? The kingdom is right here, and you can walk into it.
- "If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart, you'll be saved." Everyone can come!

You will find the kingdom of God by trusting Jesus and acting on it.

- Action is how we find things out.
- Knowledge is interactive relationship.

ROMANS 5:17

For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

- Death reigned – because of sin.
- If you look at human life on its own, it looks like death reigns.
- All of human government, for its power, depends on the ability to kill. There is no human government that doesn't rest on its power to kill.
 - Humanity lives under fear of death.
- As we live in the kingdom of God we can learn not to fear.
 - 1st John's 4:18: *"Perfect love casts out fear."*
- We can live free of fear!
- Death does not reign. WE reign.

What is reigning? Reigning is governing for good.

You are made to reign.

- The will to reign can only be healthy and good if it is under God.
- The Bible doesn't start with Genesis 3!

Genesis 1:26...and God said, let us make human beings.

- *Let them have dominion.* That's reigning!
- You can also say "let them be responsible."



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- The start of environmental ethics starts in Genesis 1.
- We're responsible under God and we could do it under God.
- But human beings pulled themselves out from under the rule of God.
 - The dark figure shows up and said..." Did God really say that? God doesn't have your best interest at heart."

Jesus says, think about your thinking! Your thinking has gone wrong.

The promise to Abraham that you and in your seed all of the families of the earth shall be blessed....

The Great Commission of Matthew 28 is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

- Jesus had been preparing the Jewish nation to carry this message for thousands of years, and now he tells his (disciples) to go and make disciples of all kinds of peoples of all nations (ethnic groups).
- As you go, make disciples, gather them in Trinitarian reality, as disciples, and teach them to do everything I said.
- What do you believe international relations are waiting for? For the people of Jesus to do what he said.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

- **Grace is God acting in our lives to accomplish what we cannot accomplish on our own.**
- Is it undeserved favor? Yes, but if that's all you know about it you do not know what form it takes. The form it takes is God acting in our lives.
- **Grace is not just how you deal with sin.** It does that, but the point of doing that is to **bring people to life** and **enable them to act** in their life with the power that God intended them to have in order to fulfill the creation covenant!

Eternal Life Now

Having an eternal life now is a matter of living your life in such an intermingling and interaction with grace that your life is a part of what God's life is doing.

- God's life is eternal.
- We learn how to bring everything we do under the dominion of grace. Bring it into the kingdom of God.
- Nature is a manifestation of grace and the kingdom of God.
- We learn how to live without fear, hostility, violence, anger.



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Jesus teaches us to live without fear.

When you live in the kingdom of God the world is a perfectly safe place to be!

- That's why Jesus said don't worry. "No worries" is only for people alive in the kingdom of God.
- We have to learn how to do that.

Worry always involves fear. Fear is anticipation of evil.

If you have one word to characterize Jesus, what word would you use? Relaxed.

- Jesus was saying something much stronger than, "You're not going to die." But rather, *"If you died, you're still okay."*
- You can come to the place where fear is not a part of your life. That really begins to change things.

Hurry is a fear response.

- You can act quickly without being in a hurry.
- John Wesley, "I am always in haste but never in a hurry, because I never take on more than I can do."
- You can live life without hurry, but you have to see yourself in the kingdom of God.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then we shall appear with him, glorious.

- Glory. One of the most essential parts of the gospel of the Kingdom of God.
- Glory is for you and for me.
- Glory has to do with glowing.

Kingdom life is resurrection life. The resurrection of Jesus is a demonstration that everything he said about the kingdom is true.



You have the life in you, you seek what is above. What is above?

- The kingdom of the heavens. The heavens in the biblical terms start right here. Goes all the way down to your feet. That's the heaven of the "atmosphere."
- Heaven of the clouds and the birds; heavens of the stars and the angels.
- We actually live in the heaven of the clouds and the birds. That's where God is and that's where he met with the Jewish people with whom he held the covenant of Abraham.
- Where God showed up for the Jewish people was in the atmosphere of the heavens. Now we seek that – and we will talk about – how do you do that?

One of the problems created for spiritual growth is the idea that once you get saved it's all over.

- But of course that's not true. Because we are growing constantly here.
- And we're taking on eternal life, now.

Eternal life is not something that starts after you die. It starts when you are born from above.

- When God enters your life and begins to move in ways that enable you to live by grace and do the things that please him with the knowledge that that's **the best thing** and not something that he just likes for you to do.

Matthew 5:13-16

You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men so that they see your good works and glorify your Father.

- Jesus said YOU are the light of the world.
- It goes right back to Genesis 1:26.
- We get to be the salt of the earth. Salt purifies, preserves, gives taste. You're the salt of the earth.
- You are uniquely tracking through human history, and YOU are IT.
- And you do that by participating in the Kingdom of God as a disciple of Jesus. And then your life is the kind of life that when people look at it, they think... "God."
- That's your privilege. Not a job. That's what you're made for. To show forth the presence of God where you are.

What is God's Kingdom?

God's Kingdom is His effective reign over things and events. It is "wherever" what God wants done is done. "Thy kingdom come."

- What does a king or government do? It reigns.
- The kingdom of God is God in action.



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- It is the range of His effective will.
- He has permitted a space where his will would not be done.

God's idea was that there should be a creature that should have a will.

- **A will is the capacity to originate things and events.**
- People express themselves in their will.
 - If they *create* something it is especially precious to them. (sandwich)
 - What you make is an expression of your will.
- What God has in himself is loving will.
- He creates people and they are invited to be a part of his will.

God is present everywhere.

- That's a theological truth.
- But he's not manifest everywhere.
- **The manifest presence of God is different than the ontological presence of God.**
- Like you are present throughout your body. You inhabit your body but you're not localizable. I can't open you up and find you.

Human beings are spiritual beings.

- Our bodies very important but we are spiritual beings and spiritual beings are not visible.
- **We live in two landscapes; one is visible, and one isn't. We have a choice as to which one we will live from.**
- One is called the mind of the flesh and the other is called the mind of the spirit.
- God makes us spiritual beings centered in a will...

God is so big that if he didn't hide himself from us, we couldn't hide from him.

- **Isaiah 45:15: "You are a God who hides yourself."**
- He's available, but you have to seek him.
- He doesn't want to come where he's not wanted.
- That's personality – you, me. We don't want to come where we're not wanted.

The range of God's effective will, that is the kingdom of God, is hidden in human affairs generally and must be sought. (Isa. 45:15, Job. 23:9-10, Isa.30:20).

When God came into the garden after the original sin - who hid after the sin? Not God! Adam hid. God was willing to cooperate with that. When God said, where are you Adam, I suggest he did not know.

Omniscience – he could know. But he may choose not to know.

- The child cannot develop unless you allow it to have places that you do not know.



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- God hides, but he's available.
- The gospel says that he's available now to everyone -and tells us how to find him!

The kingdom was "at-hand" above all in Jesus.

- It manifested itself in him -in what he proclaimed, what he manifested and what he taught.
- The Kingdom of God is the range of God's effective will.
- Think about it in terms of your kingdom.
 - We have a kingdom / queendom, and that is a part of what it means to be a person.
 - You destroy a person when you don't let them have that.
 - Your kingdom is what you have say over and that is not a bad thing. That is a good thing.

It goes back to **Genesis 1:26**. Your kingdom is under God and by time you get to **Psalm 8:6** you graduated from non-domesticated animals to domesticated animals. *"What is man, that you pay any attention to him?"* The Psalmist never had any doubt that God paid attention to him, because he was on intimate terms with God. He knew that God spoke to him, guided him, helped him – that's all kingdom stuff! All the great stories in the Old Testament; that's kingdom stuff. That's God acting WITH people. That's kingdom. David knew that.

You are made to rule.

- **Psalm 8** – you write it. What do you put on the list? What do you have rule over? Your kingdom is whatever you have say over.
- "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." I take my kingdom and put it under the kingdom of God.
- The first place of the human kingdom is the body.
- All of our kingdom extends from our body.

The most important thing that can happen to us is that we learn about God because it enables us to begin to organize our kingdom in a different way.

Revelation 22:5 – This tells you what you'll be doing forever. Reigning!

- *"They will have no need of the sun because God will be their light...and they shall live and reign with him forever and ever....When we've been there 10,000 years bright shining as the sun....there'll be no less days to sign his praise than when we first begun."*
- (Glowing is the effulgence of energy. Energy is the power to make change.)
- What are your plans? What are you going to be doing 500 years from now?

"God has hidden the soul of man from itself because otherwise it would hopelessly corrupt them with pride."

The more magnificent a thing is the worse it is when it goes wrong.



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Our kingdom is ruined by self-will.

- Puts itself in the place of God. it says, "I want."
- It's a problem...when what I want is the governing principle of my life.
- A cross is required for redemption because a cross is the end of self-will.

2 Cor. 5:15 "*Christ died for all that they who live should not live unto themselves.*"

- They don't live for themselves but for him who died for them.
- That brings the human kingdom back under the divine kingdom.
- Others who do that same thing all live in harmony because they're all subject to God.
 - Live together in love.
 - We're able to love neighbor as ourselves, and not make *ourselves* the ultimate point of reference.
- We have moved into a kingdom that sees to it that we are cared for.
- The burden of sustaining myself and getting the victory, comparing envying, desire, is gone.

The basic temptation is to take our kingdom out of God's kingdom and live on our own.

Desire destroys the life when it is made ultimate.

- Cain's problem: he did not get what he wanted.
- People get angry because their desires get crossed.
- Desire is essentially chaotic. James 4:1-3
- **Desire does not say I wonder what's best. It says, I want that and ignores everything else around it.**

Will considers alternatives. Will is not the same thing as desire.

- Many people today don't know they have a will. They think that their desires are their will- so they give their identity in terms of their desires.
- **Will is essentially a consideration of what is good.** It says, I wonder if that is the right thing. It considers alternatives.

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH ~ Galatians 5 is contrasting the works of the flesh vs the works of the spirit. The works of the flesh are chaos:

- Immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.
- These people don't inherit the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God isn't into that!
- The kingdom of God is not chaotic. It is peace and harmony because it does not run on desire.
- When the human kingdom tries to live by desire it always ruins it.



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Redemption and restoration come from the birth from above which reestablishes the Kingdom connection.

- **John 3** says "*Unless you are born from above you can't enter the Kingdom of God*"
- It's about *entering* the kingdom of God. It's not about going to heaven when you die, that'll take care of itself, if you take care to enter the kingdom.
- You enter the kingdom through the new birth and as you do that, as **2 Peter** says, you come to *partake of the divine nature*.
- That's what you were intended for - to have the *nature* of God.

The nature of God is will for good.... that's love.

- Love is will for good. If you love something, you will what is good for it.
- Desire and love are different.
- Desire is not bad in itself but it *must be subordinated* to love.
- The answer to lust is love.

Learning to reign in life through One, Jesus Christ.

- That is the *natural* outworking of the new birth.
- **Discipleship** is the process of learning to reign in life through One, Christ Jesus.

My life becomes an eternal life by making all that I do a part of what God is doing.

Vicar means someone who stands in the place of and acts on behalf of. You are a vicar of God by your creation and by your redemption.

Colossians 3:17 – Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- Doing it in his name = power of attorney.
- Power of Attorney gives someone the right and responsibility to act on my behalf from my resources.
- To act in his name is to act for his benefit and from his resources.



Question and Answer:

Q: Desire is not in itself bad, but it has to be subordinated to what is good. It is not always wrong.

It is when it becomes the ultimate point of reference that it goes wrong. Desire, like feeling, is a bad master but a good servant. Desire plays a positive role in our life. It is a good thing. We must make sure desire doesn't subvert our will. An addict is someone who has sold out their will to their desires.

Q: Alcoholics – are they born that way? Or is it a matter of choice?

The facts are that some people are more inclined to become dependent on alcohol than others. You cannot explain anything a person becomes just in terms of their natural tendencies. That is always a choice. The way choice works is usually a succession or series of choices and then we become set in a particular way.

God never makes anyone with a character of any kind good or bad. He gives them a personality and a way of making choices and if they're not led and taught and able to see the course of their experience, they may drift into things which when they look back they will say well I never decided to be this way. And that's true. Its inch by inch, little by little. We are responsible for our choices.

Now what do you do about it is another question. Whatever the cause, you have the issue of choice - what got you there and what are you going to do now? Often those who say 'I didn't choose' are not prepared to do anything to change.

- NOTE: We must be careful, loving, know people, understand what they want and how they can be helped. It does not help to label people and condemn them because of that.
- Some people think any judgement is condemning. Difference between judgement (condemnation) and discernment. For example, the dentist.

Q: How do I grow in grace and what things can I do?

- Grow in grace by accepting more of the action of God in your life.
- Grace is God acting in your life to enable you to accomplish what you cannot accomplish on our own.
- I have to take advantage of the occasions for allowing grace to take over where I used to take over myself.

Q: Goal: to have a will directed towards good, mastering desire. How do I get there? What advice do you give people that are discouraged by the idea that "I can't make that."

Start by teaching them about things. Help them understand what it is, where it comes from.



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Everything we're tempted to do comes through a process. You have to know what it is, be able to recognize when it's coming, to know where help is, to train yourself to go for help when you need it. Identify the process.

You must decide that you really do not want to have the desires that you have.

Create a plan for dealing with it.

- Live through modification of desire.
- Must understand the role of the body in life; it's made for spiritual life; is to be an advantage to spiritual life.
- We train our body in such a way, that instead of being ready to do the wrong thing, or not do the right thing, it's ready to do the right thing, and not ready to do the wrong thing.

