



*Covenant
and
Kingdom*

A DISCUSSION GUIDE

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A Word Before

These discussion questions are meant to evoke rather than inform. Let us explain. Often, small group questions end up being little more than thinly veiled attempts at content delivery. That isn't all bad. Information does help learning. But while we mean for people to explore the depths to which God is calling them, what often happens is that we as leaders can't resist "helping" a person come up with the "right" answer. And in doing so, we short-circuit them hearing the voice of God for themselves. We know it's not the most effective way to learn, but we persist because—if we are honest—we have our doubts that the Holy Spirit can do the Holy Spirit's job of leading each person into all truth. So we step in to fill the gap. Noble, but misguided.

In contrast, these are questions meant to evoke something. Jesus called that something the *kairos* (cf. Mark 1:15: "The *kairos* has come..."), that is, an opportunity to see God's kingdom, to turn aside and enter it through the doorway of your own heart. The content out of which the *kairos* will come is Covenant & Kingdom—The DNA of the Bible by Mike Breen and the weekend teaching. These discussion questions are meant to help you help your leaders and/or your group do two very basic biblical things: Repent and Believe.

First, to give you a practical way to help them observe, reflect on, and discuss the things God is doing in their hearts (including your own as the leader). It's in this process that thinking differently—repenting—becomes possible. Martin Luther said it this way: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."

Second, to give you a practical way to help them plan, to help them act on what God has said and to hold them accountable for following through. It's obeying Jesus' command in the Sermon on the Mount about the importance of actually doing what he said. It's here that acting differently—believing—becomes possible.

Before you begin, a couple of thoughts about questions:

- Questions are doorways. Walk through the doorway they open. Jesus used questions as a way of opening people's hearts.
- Know where you want to take people. This study forms a foundation for shaping disciples who look and act like Jesus, not delivering interesting content or introducing a new program. There is a difference.
- Questions are meant to start conversations, not end them. Martin Buber said, be "open to the unbidden." In other words, see what the question uncovers in people's answers and where the Holy Spirit is leading them.
- Questions require space. Often you'll need to give people—particularly the introverts in your group—time to process before responding. In that vein, silence is golden.

Week 1 | Abraham & the Covenant

Builds on:

Weekend Teaching 1: Who You Are (Abraham and Sarah)

Weekly Reading in Covenant & Kingdom: Creation through Abraham, pages 3-38.

What's the benefit, as a leader, to seeing the Bible through this lens of Covenant and Kingdom? What's been your lens up until this point?

Thinking about your relationship with God:

- Where have you seen God come through for you so that you are sure He loves you?
- Where have you wanted to see God come through but are still waiting? What does the waiting produce in you currently?
- Do you feel comfortable bartering/negotiating with God? Why or why not?
- Does your answer to that question reveal something about how you see the nature of your relationship with God? If so, what? What keeps you from talking boldly to God?
- At what points—practically speaking—do you believe that all of God's resources are now your resources?
- What evidence is there to support that?
- What words are you longing to hear from God that would make your heart leap?
- Look into Jesus' face: Is there a look of disappointment...or a smile?
- In what ways has God confirmed His relationship with you, assuring you that He's near you? In what ways would you like Him to do this

First gut-level response: Do you believe that God says about you what God says about Jesus: You are my beloved son, I am very pleased in you? Why or why not?

What identity have you been holding onto that you need to let go of in order to embrace your identity as God's dearly loved son or daughter?

What are the barriers you have to surrendering your life to God's? Can you give them up right now?

Week 2 | Joseph & the Kingdom

Builds on:

Weekend Teaching 2: How Character Grows (Joseph)

Weekly Reading in Covenant & Kingdom: Joseph through Ruth, pages 41-94.

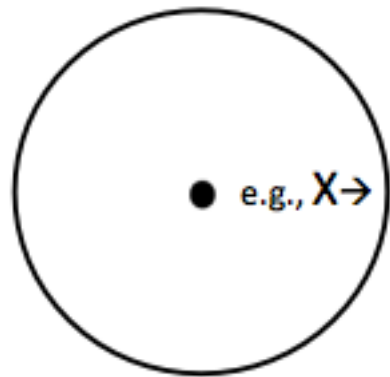
Where or when have you been despised for your gifts? Or felt the need to cover them up? Where have you done the same to someone else? What was this experience like? (e.g., you tried to get rid of someone else/he or she tried to get rid of you)

In your life and ministry, where are you currently sharing the credit with God? Where are you leaving little-to-no room for God?

What is the value of being broken? Where does the shift come from seeing it as a terrible thing to seeing it as a character-shaping thing?

Do you have a spirit of poverty or abundance regarding what you believe God wants to give you as His Covenant partner? How do you know that?

“X” marks the spot. Use the circle below to represent your universe. Mark where you are with an arrow showing which direction you are headed: At the center? At the edge? Somewhere between?



Often we throw words, phrases and ideas around without examining their depths. Spend a bit of time reflecting on Paul’s plan to be like Jesus: I die daily. What does that mean, practically speaking? Use your time, money and relationships as a grid to flesh that out.

Time	Money	Relationships
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Week 3 | Moses

Builds on:

Weekend Teaching 3: Moses

Weekly Reading in Covenant & Kingdom: David through Old Testament, pages 97-133.

Do you primarily see God as Father or King? Why?

Looking at the Covenant triangle, how do you currently see God—as a Father who demands obedience or a Father who gives identity?

Looking at the Kingdom triangle, how do you currently see God—as a King who abuses power or a King who gives authority?

Of Covenant and Kingdom, which is most difficult for you to live into currently? Why?

What are the barriers to believing that your life can have the impact of a Moses?
Is there a desert you currently need to embrace?
Is there a calling you need to respond to?

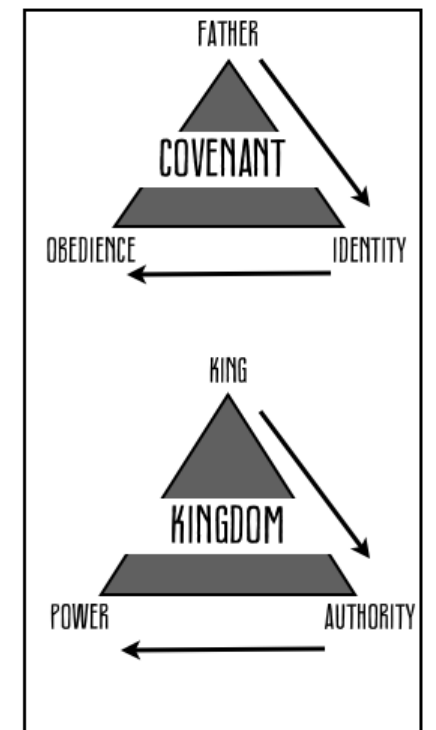
Where do you see obedience without identity in the life of the church you lead or belong to? In your own life?

What has been your experience with exercising God’s authority and power? What does that look like practically?

Discuss the next step. Where do you need to focus on embracing—God as Father or God as King?

What gets the majority of your focus in your leadership and ministry?

Covenant—relationship, or Kingdom—responsibility?
If you took an inventory of your leadership messages, which would be the primary focus?



Week 4 | Jesus & the Temptations

Builds on:

Weekend Teaching 4: Beating Temptation (Jesus and the Temptations)
Weekly Reading in Covenant & Kingdom: Jesus through Healing, pages 137-170.

Let's explore the link between identity and security.

- In your experience, why are people insecure?
- What's the advice you've heard or been given about overcoming insecurity?
- How does Jesus not lose to insecurity?
- How would Jesus answer the question: Who are you? In other words, if He had to fill in this blank: "I am a _____," what would He say? How would you answer that question?
- Did Jesus earn His identity, or was it given to Him? Is yours earned or given?

What are the reactions you've seen (or had) when a person's identity is threatened?

Recognizing that all of us are tempted, which of the devil's temptations is your 'Achilles' Heel'?

Which one trips you up the most?

- Appetite?
- Ambition?
- Affirmation?

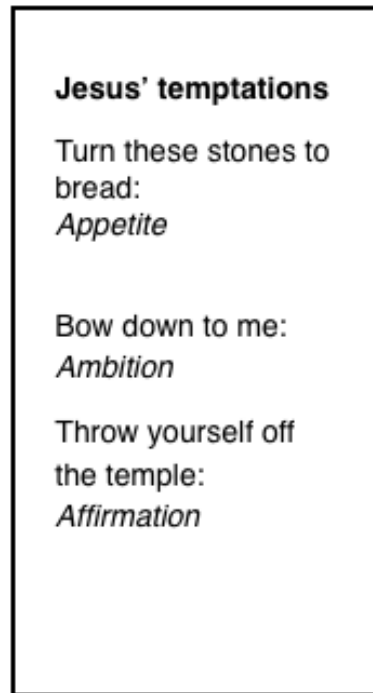
Role play: Someone comes to you for counsel and tells you he or she can't stop a particular sin. What do you say? What's been said to you in the past? Does it work?

Make a plan: What disciplines of disengagement do you need to help you say no to temptation?

Who knows you and will hold you accountable to your plan?

What discipline do you need in place to choose to lose?

What are the things that keep you from fully surrendering to God?



Week 5 | Jesus and the Cross

Builds on:

Weekend Teaching 5: Jesus and the Cross
Weekly Reading in Covenant & Kingdom: Retreat through Pentecost, pages 173-199.

Let's think about life as a disciple through the lens of substitution and victory.

Substitution

- What does substitution mean for identity, specifically for your efforts to earn God's love or prove yourself?
- What gets set free in the human heart when you realize judgment day has already come? What gets set free for you?
- How does substitution break down the internal resistance we have to seeing ourselves like God does—like Jesus?
- What does it mean in real life if we do? What if we don't?
- Where do the people in your church most need to hear the healing words that Jesus really has paid it all? Where do you?
- What can you do to help those words be spoken?

Victory

- What does victory mean for the human need to feel secure about the future, specifically about needing to know the outcome of the future in order to act in the present?
- How does Jesus' victory on the Cross speak to failure, specifically to your failures in the past and to the failures yet to come in your future?
- In what way does Jesus' victory inform risk in Kingdom endeavors (healing, evangelism, mission, etc.)?
- Where does God still need to have victory over your church? Over you?

Week 6 | Jesus, Paul and the Church

Notes

Builds on:

Weekend Teaching 6: Jesus, Paul and the Church

Weekly Reading: Early Church through Conclusion, pages 203-251.

There has been a building refrain to this point in our study together. The reinforcement over and over again has been that you are loved and so you can love, you belong and so reach out, your identity is secure and so your authority can be expressed, your relationship with God is secure, so you can risk undertaking the responsibilities God is calling you to.

The time has come. This week is about action. We have heard good news, so what are we going to do about it? Let's work through a couple of barriers, and then make plans to be the church Jesus intends.

What keeps people from experiencing Jesus in our community? What are the barriers that we need to remove? Where are they personally? Where are they corporately?

What are my responsibilities to the world if I am a follower of Jesus?

Flesh out the calling of your church. What are some practical ways you could begin living out of the Covenant as agents of the Kingdom?

In other words, where is Jesus desperately needed in your community?

What is God saying to us? What are we going to do about it?