

THE JESUS CREED

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your **heart**,

with all your **soul**, with all your **mind**, and with all your **strength**."

The second is this: "*Love* your **neighbor** as yourself."

There is no commandment greater

than these.

Questions for Further Reflection

Study Guide 3

Opening Question: When you think of responding to the call of Jesus to follow Him, do you tend to think of it as something you do as an individual person (just you and God) or as something you do as a part of a community of fellow followers? Do you think it matters how you frame this? Why? Can you think of other life parallels?

Questions for Further Reflection

Study Guide 3

Since we no longer live in “kingdoms” what would a good alternative term be that would make sense in our culture. Scot McKnight suggests “society.” Can you think of any other terms that would capture what Jesus is trying to convey? (You can come back to this question later if your ideas change as you go).

As you reflect on the Lord’s Prayer, what implications do the various parts have for understanding what this kingdom is all about? (Notice particularly the bold words)

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be **your name**

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done **on earth** as it is in heaven

Give **us** today our daily bread

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors

Lead **us** not into temptation

But deliver **us** from the evil one.

What additional insights about the kingdom of God that Jesus spoke of do we get from Luke 17:21?

How does our way of following Jesus change if we see the “kingdom” less just in terms of “me and God” and more in terms of “us and God”?

Questions for Further Reflection

Study Guide 3

Ponder these passages that make reference to the Kingdom. What sort of pictures to they create in your minds? What do you hear in new and fresh ways?

Matthew 4:17

Matthew 16:19

Mark 10:13-15

Luke 17:20-21

How does our way of following Jesus change if we see the “kingdom” less just in terms of what we enter into after the second coming, and more in terms of what we experience in our relationships with each other right now? How can this be “both and” rather than “either or”?

One of the understated but powerful images of the kingdom that Jesus uses is that of the mustard seed. In Mark 4 Jesus tells this parable as the conclusion to a number of other kingdom parables. Take a few moments to reflect on these images in Mark 4:1-34 and notice the characteristics of the kingdom that emerge there.

Questions for Further Reflection

Study Guide 3

As you listen to the way Jesus introduced his ministry of proclaiming the kingdom in Luke 4:18-19, how could those words be understood differently depending on whether your view of the kingdom is:

Just something personal
(just between me and God)

Something that is mainly about
society and social structures

Something that
Includes both

What contributions do these texts make to our understanding of the kingdom?

Matthew 25:31-46

Luke 18:1-8

The tendency among many in the time of Jesus was to make connections between the things that people struggled with and their value as a part of the community. How does Jesus model and proclaim a different way of being together with others?

Mark 1:29-31

Mark 1: 40-45

Mark 2:1-12

Mark 5:1-20

Mark 5:24-34

Perhaps you can think of other examples?

Questions for Further Reflection

Study Guide 3

In one of the great “context setting” stories in the Bible, where John records how Jesus introduces His ministry through turning water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana, we get a glimpse of the “tone” of kingdom life. The water in the pots reserved for the endless washings in an attempt to ceremonially “clean” is turned into wine, the symbol of joy and celebration. Take a moment or two to contrast what life together is like when the feeling tone is based on:

Anxiety

Will we be able to be good enough
to qualify for a place in the kingdom?

Joy

The experience of living a life in response
to grace that invites others to join in

How would you evaluate the “feeling tone” of the religious communities that you are a part of? What is the difference between “yearning” and “anxiety”?

The scriptures also give us a glimpse of the ultimate realization of the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed. Take a few moments to enjoy the imagery in the following passages. What are the qualities or elements of what you see there that we should be seeking to embody in our experience of the kingdom right now?

Revelation 19:5-9

Revelation 21:1-7

Revelation 22:1-6