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UPSIDE DOWN (1): COLLISION

BOTTOM LINE: THERE ARE TWO KINGDOMS THAT ARE TRYING TO COEXIST IN OUR LIVES—BUT THERE IS ONLY ROOM FOR ONE.

INTRODUCTION: When we're talking about our lives, most of us wouldn't think in terms of "kingdoms." But the reality is that each one of us has one. We have some area of our lives where we rule and reign. Your kingdom may be as vast as your school, or it may be as small as your bedroom or your cell phone. There's a place in your life where you are in complete control and really don't care what anyone else thinks or wants. A place where you exert your will. And if you're a follower of Christ, this is a problem because it competes with His kingdom—and there's only room for one kingdom and only room for one King.



WONDER.
DISCOVERY.
PASSION.

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CREATING THE EXPERIENCE

We believe that the set, stage, music and everything in your room communicates a message—without you saying a word. That's why we put together a list of production ideas to help you set the stage for the session and the series. From the music you play when students come into the room to the worship set your band plays, we want to make sure that your room conveys “Upside Down” in a multi-sensory way. There is a downloadable checklist available in your series downloads that will give you all the elements for this session (and the entire series).

BACKGROUND PLAYLIST FOR UPSIDE DOWN SERIES:

- “Upside Down” by Jack Johnson (from *Sing-a-Longs and Lullabies for the Film Curious George*)
- “The Show” by Lenka (from *Lenka*)
- “Drops of Jupiter” by Train (from *Drops of Jupiter*)
- “What Life Would Be Like” by Big Daddy Weave (from *What Life Would Be Like*)
- “Light On” by David Cook (from *David Cook*)
- “Get Up” by Mary Mary (from *The Sound*)
- “The World Turned Upside Down” by Coldplay (from *Fix You – EP*)
- “There Will Be a Day” by Jeremy Camp (from *Speaking Louder Than Before*)
- “Boomin’ (Bonus Remix) [feat. Shonlock]” by tobyMac (from *Portable Sounds With Bonus Remixes*)
- “Till Kingdom Come” by Coldplay (from *X & Y*)

WORSHIP PLAYLIST FOR UPSIDE DOWN SESSION 1:

- “Hallelujah To My King” by Paul Baloche (from *The Writer’s Collection*)
- “King Of Glory” by Chris Tomlin (from *Arriving*)
- “Not To Us / Here Is Our King” by Todd Fields (from *North Point Live*)
- “King” by Audio Adrenaline (from *Until My Heart Caves In*)

THE SET

For the Upside Down series, make your room or set a literal example of the title. Turn things upside down or inside out. You could turn your chairs upside down for the first week (of course they could turn them right side up for sitting). You could also play off of opposites. For instance, if something is normally black, make it white. Or you could make your entrance the exit. If you are using the games provided in the middle school adaptation, then create a mini-kingdom by placing a throne in a particular place on your set or in your room.

SERIES ART

Art for PowerPoint backgrounds and for series promotional ads is available as a free download with every series. Visit the XP3 web site, log on to your account and download the images to use in your presentation, newsletters and web site.

VIDEO

Both a video bumper and a video communicator are available for the Upside Down series as a video download from the reThink store. You can purchase the videos by logging into your XP3 account and clicking on the “XP3 videos” link. The bumper video was created to be used as an intro for all three sessions of the Upside Down series. The Upside Down video communicator was created to be used in Session 1 of this series in place of the teaching script.

In addition to these two videos, there is an excellent video available online to use as an illustration for Session 3. The video is available from the online store from Willow Creek (store.willowcreek.org) and it's called “A Thousand Questions.” The Willow Creek online store does not offer a preview of the video, but if you do a Google search using the key words “A Thousand Questions video,” you should be able to find a preview of the video.



MIDDLE SCHOOL ADAPTATION

The following activities and illustrations will help middle school students connect with the subject matter in ways that engage them physically, mentally, socially and sometimes emotionally.

SERIES IDEA:

Throughout this series try to incorporate a small section in the front of the room that will resemble a small kingdom. Have some really nice chairs or a comfy couch for a student or two to sit on. You may also want to provide the students with beverages and snacks, maybe a dozen doughnuts. You'll want to make it an enticing and popular place where students will want to be. Be creative with the space. Each week let the winning student(s) of the game sit and rule in their own kingdom for the rest of your program. You may want to allow that person or persons to invite one guest to sit with them and enjoy the reward.

GAME: KING OF THE CAN

(This game is designed to be used as an icebreaker to Session 1.)

Select about eight students to play this physical game. To be fair, you may want to play one round with guys and another round with girls. Place a large rubber trashcan in the center of your room and have eight students stand in a circle around it. Between each student you will need a short two-foot piece of rope that the two students will hold on to (you could also use socks, bandanas, or whatever else you have lying around). Tie a knot in each end of the rope as a grip for each student. Once the eight students have formed a complete circle around the trashcan using the ropes to hold them together, they can begin the game. The object is to push, pull, or swing opposing players into the trash can without letting go of their ropes. If any student touches the trashcan or lets go of his or her rope, that person is eliminated. Restart after each elimination with one less person until there is just one remaining student—the King of the Can!

ILLUSTRATION: Pictionary

(Use this illustration an introduction to the TRUTH section of the teaching script, before point "A".)

Before you begin your lesson select a student or two to come to the front and play a quick game of *Pictionary*. Give the students a few easy phrases to draw, and for the rest of your group to guess (i.e. an elephant, a church, the Grand Canyon). Then give them one last phrase to try and draw—the "kingdom of God". They will most likely have some difficulty describing it for the other students. They may even come up with some ideas that incorrectly portray what the kingdom of God is. Give them some time and see what they come up with. You may even want to let a few other students try to draw it. This will be a nice introduction to this series.



UPSIDE DOWN (1): COLLISION

BOTTOM LINE: THERE ARE TWO KINGDOMS THAT ARE TRYING TO COEXIST IN OUR LIVES—BUT THERE IS ONLY ROOM FOR ONE.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRO:

People create their own kingdoms.

TENSION:

Anyone in charge of a kingdom or in charge of a specific area is exercising their will, their desires.

"The time has come," [Jesus] said, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15 NIV).

"The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you" (Mark 4:11 NIV).

[Jesus] sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick (Luke 9:2 NIV).

"Seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33 NIV).

What is this kingdom?

TRUTH:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10 NIV).

Your Kingdom come = Your will being done.

Someone's will and someone's kingdom are linked together.

God's will and God's kingdom are connected.

Jesus was a walking example of what God's kingdom would look like.

APPLICATION:

Jesus' kingdom sounds good, but not when our personal kingdoms are at risk.

If left up to us, we would pray, "My kingdom come, my will be done."

My kingdom will always care more about self-preservation.

Where is your kingdom?

LANDING:

Before you can even begin to seek God's kingdom, you have to identify your own kingdom.

Where is your kingdom?



UPSIDE DOWN (1): COLLISION

TEACHING SCRIPT

BOTTOM LINE: THERE ARE TWO KINGDOMS THAT ARE TRYING TO COEXIST IN OUR LIVES—BUT THERE IS ONLY ROOM FOR ONE.

(Note to Communicator: The tendency as you communicate this week will be to not only help students identify the kingdoms in their lives, but help them come to a point of resolving or yielding to God's kingdom. But don't go there. We'll do that in Session 2. Since the concept of "kingdoms" is probably different than the way the majority of your students think about their lives, it's worth camping out on this point and helping them arrive at a place where they simply begin to see their kingdoms.)

INTRODUCTION

A. There are some people you just don't mess with—do you know what I mean? Like if some guy plays professional football and weighs 300 pounds of pure muscle, you don't go up to him and say, "Hey, sissy man." Or if a woman walks in and she might be pregnant, but you're not 100-percent sure, you just don't ask for fear of the wrath that may follow. Or if you're walking down a city street at night all alone, and someone looks suspicious, you don't make eye contact just in case they end up taking you down. I would also add one person to the list of people you don't mess with—my grandmother. You don't mess with her.

She doesn't look very threatening. She's probably around five feet tall and is in her eighties. And while she's not the warmest person in the world, she's also not the meanest—well, unless you do one thing. And one day at church, I found out what that one thing was.

B. I had just started attending the large church where my grandmother had gone for years, and on one particular Sunday, I arrived a few minutes earlier than my friends. I decided to use the time to visit with my grandmother. I walked up to the front of the church and saw her hunched over, slowly shuffling her way down a row of chairs. She was placing a single white envelope on each seat. She looked up and gave me a smile.

C. Before I could ask her what she was doing, a man and his wife walked up to the littered chairs and tried to sit down. My grandmother's smile quickly faded. She said with a stern, harsh voice, "Those seats are saved," and she gave them the stare-down. The couple suddenly started looking around awkwardly for another place to sit, and they quickly walked back about 10 rows—far away from my grandmother's staked-out territory. Minutes later, several elderly women made their way up to where my grandmother was and took their reserved places.

D. My grandmother and her friends had staked out their territory, and she was unwilling to give in to anyone who might mess with her agenda. Her actions showed me a side of her I had never seen, and really turned my thinking about her upside down. She had set up her own kingdom with somewhat invisible boundaries.

TENSION

A. As crazy as you might think my grandmother is—and I must admit that she frightened both me and that unsuspecting couple—she's not the only one with a kingdom. We all have one. You might not have a castle, a crown or a royal joker, but you do have a kingdom. You have certain decisions you make every day that are an expression of your will or your desires. What you are wearing is an expression of your kingdom. You decided what to put on this morning. Your iPod is your kingdom. You decide what music is on there. Your cell phone is your kingdom. You decide what calls you answer and who gets put on speed dial or your "favorites" list. Your kingdom is the place where you decide the way things are going to be. The place where you exert your will.



UPSIDE DOWN (1): COLLISION TEACHING SCRIPT

TENSION (CONT'D)

B. Anyone in charge of a kingdom or in charge of a specific area is exercising their will, their desires. It's kind of like that children's game called "King of the Hill." The whole point of the game was that the king would stand at the top of the hill and push everyone else off who tried to get to the top. You wanted to be the last person standing. (Come to think of it, my grandmother would be really good at that game.) If you were the last one standing, you won.

C. So why are we talking about kingdoms? Well, because Jesus talked about it—all the time. In fact, it appears so much in the New Testament that you really can't ignore it. Here are just a few examples:

"The time has come," [Jesus] said, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"
(Mark 1:15 NIV).

"The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you" (Mark 4:11 NIV).

[Jesus] sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick (Luke 9:2 NIV).

"Seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"
(Matthew 6:33 NIV).

D. The idea of the kingdom of God was central to the message of Jesus. His words seemed not only to communicate what the kingdom would be, but also that it somehow would happen now. It's both a someday idea and a present reality. Confused? I don't blame you. It's upside down from how you and I normally think about things. But given how important it was to Jesus, it's a good idea to try to figure out what exactly He was talking about. What is this kingdom?

TRUTH

A. Most of us, when we hear the word "kingdom," think of a place where a king or a queen is ruling. Our idea of a kingdom isn't all that different from what people would have thought 2,000 years ago when they heard this word. When people heard Jesus talk about a kingdom, something pretty similar came to mind.

When Jesus came on the scene, the Jews were living in the kingdom of Rome, more commonly known to us today as the Roman Empire. So when Jesus talked about a new kingdom, a kingdom of God, you can bet that people perked up a bit. They would have welcomed change from the current governing authority. When they heard about this kingdom of God, they probably envisioned a shift in power, a new government where Jesus was king and they were free from Rome. And the kind of kingdom they imagined was one where after years of oppression, the Jews would finally be the ones in charge.

B. Now, if you were living under Roman rule, this would seem like a really good thing because of how oppressive the Roman government was. And Jesus seemed like a good guy to be in charge of this new kingdom. He healed people. He cared about people. He preached a lot about change. And everything He did or said seemed like a great escape from where the people of Israel were. But those who followed Jesus had an image of a kingdom that conflicted with what Jesus actually had in mind.



UPSIDE DOWN (1): COLLISION TEACHING SCRIPT

TRUTH (CONT'D)

- C. Let's look at one of the instances where Jesus talked about this kingdom. It's part of a prayer. In fact, this prayer was an example that Jesus used to teach His disciples how to pray. He wasn't teaching them some mantra to cite, but rather showing them how to pray—demonstrating what should be the intent and direction of the words. And He began by saying:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"
(Matthew 6:9-10 NIV).

- D. Okay, let's stop there. You can't necessarily see this from the English translation, but in the original text, Jesus used a really interesting literary tool. Now, before you start tuning me out because this sounds too much like a grammar class, hear me out. He uses something we call parallelism. Basically, parallelism is like saying the same thing twice but using different words. It was a really common practice in the ancient Middle East.

So Jesus was saying, "Your Kingdom come = Your will being done." Basically, someone's will and someone's kingdom are linked together; God's will and God's kingdom are connected. That statement would have meant that God's kingdom coming is the same as God's will being done here in this world. All of those verses we looked at referring to God's kingdom actually mean God's will. In other words, God's will is near, God's will is what we seek, etc.

- E. Jesus' message was, "I am bringing God's way of doing things into a world where things have gone terribly wrong. God's way is coming." Essentially, Jesus Himself was a walking example of what God's kingdom would look like. By living a blameless life, He was saying, "If you want to know what God looks like, it's Me. If you want to see what God's kingdom looks like, watch Me."

But it doesn't stop there. Let's take it a step further. Jesus said that He wants you—meaning all of us as His followers—to pray as He prayed. This is how God's way would begin to come into this Earth. In a world characterized by jealousy, greed and bitterness, we are to pray that God's will, that God's kingdom, would come to rule here. Sounds like a pretty big task, doesn't it? It is.

- F. But Jesus modeled the way. And by looking at Jesus' example and looking back at what God's will for humanity has been since the beginning, we can start to get a picture of what God's kingdom coming looks like. What was God's original will for us before He let us choose our own way here on Earth? What was the world like, that God created, before Adam and Eve chose brokenness? It was wholeness. The world God created was a world without pain. It was a world where humanity was in sync with Him; where humanity was in sync with each other; and where there was no sickness, dysfunction or drama.

And when Jesus came to the world, He was in the business of restoring wholeness to people—be it physical, mental or spiritual. All of the things that were broken in the garden because of sin, Jesus came to restore. He restored sight to the blind because blindness was not part of God's original plan. He healed the sick because sickness was not part of God's original plan. He comforted the hurting because sorrow was not part of God's original plan.

But most importantly, when Jesus came He restored our relationship with God. His life and His death became the bridge for us to have an ongoing relationship with the Creator of the universe. What was destroyed in Eden was restored on Calvary.



UPSIDE DOWN (1): COLLISION TEACHING SCRIPT

APPLICATION

- A. Jesus restored what was broken; that was the purpose of His kingdom then and that is how His kingdom comes now. So basically, if we had to sum up God's kingdom with one word, it would be restoration. But here's where things start to get messy. Very rarely are your kingdoms and my kingdoms about restoration. If most of us were honest, we would admit our own personal kingdoms really are centered around that whole "King of the Hill" mentality—we push anything and anyone away that messes with us ruling our kingdoms. And while the idea of Jesus' kingdom sounds good in theory, it starts to lose some of its appeal when our personal kingdom is at risk. It feels so opposite from how most of us are wired. See, our kingdoms, in an effort to profit ourselves, often involve a lot of breaking, a lot of fracturing and a lot of damage all for the sake of "me."
- B. But Jesus' time here on Earth involved a lot of fixing—and it wasn't at the expense of other people or by forcing people to bow to His will. See how this could be a problem? The kingdom of God and the kingdom of me are often at odds. His kingdom was like no kingdom His disciples, the people of Israel or the Roman Empire had ever seen before. His kingdom, His will, doesn't look a whole lot like what we would expect either. We live in a world where people make bad decisions with their wills, and where everyone tends to think that their kingdoms are the most important. We all sort of bump into each other as our kingdoms collide with one another and with God.
- C. The disciples and the people of Jesus' time felt this. When Jesus was teaching the disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done," this was a big deal. The followers of Jesus had one idea of a kingdom—and it involved an empire where Rome was put in its place. But God's kingdom involved Jesus dying a criminal's death by execution. And while the disciples were committed to following Jesus, they had to choose between their own personal desire for a kingdom where life would be easier and more comfortable, or the kingdom that Jesus was talking about. Because of the difference in kingdoms, their ideas, their expectations became painfully clear. They began to see where there was a contrast, even if they had the best intentions. So Jesus prayed, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done," because He knew if He left it up to us, we would pray, "My kingdom come, my will be done." In modeling this prayer, He was essentially saying, "Your kingdom and My kingdom probably look totally different."
- D. It still happens today. Look around you. Without looking very far, we see evidence of our kingdoms that totally contradict the kingdom of God Jesus talked about. I can remember how I idolized my big sister when I was growing up. I just adored her. Needless to say, the feeling was not mutual. But in my attempt to mimic everything she did or had, I developed a nasty habit of sneaking into her room while she was at school to "borrow" her things—mostly jewelry or things I could stick in my pockets without anyone noticing. I know, this sounds kind of psychotic, but I did eventually outgrow the problem. There was one time when she had this ring that I loved. I mean, I totally wanted this ring. One afternoon, I took it from her room and wore it, even though it was too big. Later that day, I went to the playground to play with my mom. I remember walking home, looking down at my hand and realizing the ring was gone. I had lost one of my sister's most prized possessions. My kingdom said to keep quiet about it. I didn't want to get in trouble; I wanted to avoid the punishment that was sure to come. My kingdom will always care more about self-preservation. But God's kingdom is about restoration, remember?



UPSIDE DOWN (1): COLLISION TEACHING SCRIPT

APPLICATION (CONT'D)

- E. Sometimes this tension isn't just between God and me—sometimes I feel this collision when my kingdom bumps into someone else's. And when that happens, I have to decide if I'm willing to set my kingdom aside and respond in a way that is aligned with God's kingdom.

The other day I was in a heated argument with a friend, and when we hung up the phone, it was obvious our friendship was on the downswing. Afterwards, I didn't want to call her back; I wanted to let bitterness creep in. Calling her back would be too hard. So for several days, my will won. The kingdom of me was threatened, but prevailing. But I couldn't escape this feeling that, as a follower of Jesus, I am supposed to want the kingdom of God to come, not my kingdom. And that meant that in this situation, I had to call her back. Because bitterness isn't God's way. Destruction of friendship isn't God's way. That's my way.

- F. So where is your kingdom? The church answer would be "I live in God's kingdom," but you and I both know that we all have those places where we want God to take His hands off our lives and let us function how we want to operate, not how He wants us to live. We all have ways of thinking, grudges we hold on to, habits we feed, relationships that are too intertwined, things we want to say, places in our lives where we know what God wants to do, and we just say, "No thanks." We would rather be in the business of preserving our kingdoms.

If your kingdom is your iPod, what is on there that is influencing you more than you'd like to admit? If your kingdom is your relationships, what guy/girl has such a grip on your heart that you really don't care what God says? If your kingdom is this group, what are you so afraid of? What causes you to avoid new people who come here? If your kingdom is your own comfort, why are you afraid to do something that you know will stretch you and help you experience God in a new way by serving others?

LANDING

- A. Following Jesus is not easy. Our will often wants to coerce, manipulate and be greedy. To invite Jesus' kingdom to come into our lives, our worlds, means we invite Jesus to be king instead of us. We invite His way of doing things, His will, to take precedence over ours. We get out of the way.
- B. But before you can even begin to seek God's kingdom, you have to find your own. You have to identify that area or those areas of your life where your kingdom rules, the areas where you exert your will. So today, start there. Find your kingdom. Before you can surrender all your kingdoms to God, you have to start pinpointing what those are, and looking at what it would take to make that surrender happen. It will require something more from you than a simple prayer. It will require you living and even thinking differently. We'll talk more about that next week. But for now, ask yourself, "Where is my kingdom?"

TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS