

*This midweek study will explore the biblical design of the church and God's kingdom. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Church and Kingdom

The church and the kingdom of God are closely related, though not identical. When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is referring to the reign of God in the world. The church is the people of God who live under His loving rule now, in anticipation of the full manifestation of God's kingdom in the future. The church's mission is to witness to God's kingdom, proclaiming God's message of salvation through Christ and demonstrating the power of the gospel through good works, so that others may be brought to live under God's reign.

### 1 The kingdom of God is wherever people joyfully acknowledge and rejoice in the reign of God. (Psa. 98:4-9)

- ▶ *What is England? (Give students time to answer). Did your answers focus on England as a political nation, or as a culture?*  
Chances are your students focused on England as a political nation. Discuss how England is also a culture (tea, fish and chips, God save the Queen, etc.).
- ▶ *In what sense is England both a political nation and culture?*  
Note that either way, England is a visible entity. In the same way, the kingdom of God is a visible entity.
- ▶ *In what way is the kingdom of God a visible entity? What are some examples of how we can see the kingdom of God today?*  
You may need to give students some ideas, such as soup kitchens or hospitals or schools.
- ▶ *How will the kingdom of God be visible when Jesus returns?*

#### Read Psalm 98:4-9.

- ▶ *How is this passage a description of the kingdom of God?*
- ▶ *How does Psalm 98 show the kingdom of God is a place of full peace?*

### 2 The church of God is the collection of people who joyfully acknowledge Jesus as Lord. (1 Pet. 2:9)

- ▶ *What is the difference between England and the people of England?*  
The difference between England and the people of England is like the difference between the kingdom of God and the church. How would you define the church?

#### Read 1 Peter 2:9.

- ▶ *How does Peter define the church?*
- ▶ *What inferences can we draw from each of these analogies?*

### 3 The church is, for the most part, responsible for the cultivation of the kingdom of God.

(Luke 17:20-21; 19:17)

- ▶ *Imagine that China, the United States, England, Russia, and India each founded their own colonies on Mars. What responsibilities do you think the leaders of each country would give their colonists?*

Each colony would be interested in advancing its own culture and establishing itself on this new planet. In the same way, the church bears witness to and grows the kingdom of God on earth until Jesus returns.

- ▶ *What responsibilities would you give to the church to advance the kingdom of God? What responsibilities does God give to the church?*

Answers might include things like evangelism, stewardship, justice, reconciliation, and so on.

#### Read Luke 19:17.

- ▶ *What did the master say to the faithful steward here? By extension, what will God say to faithful Christians who have sought to advance the Kingdom?*

Our responsibility and authority will not end with Jesus' return, but actually increases. We will rule with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21).

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What are some small ways we can advance the kingdom of God this week? What are some big ways we can advance the Kingdom over the next ten years?*