

Entering the Kingdom

This booklet is designed for new believers or older ones who may not be familiar with the commands of Christ and the apostolic teaching on them regarding entering God's kingdom. The study focuses on obedience from Matthew 28:19, 20:

As you go, make disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.

The study is considered "basic" because it focuses on the basics of what it means to enter the Kingdom of God. These are found in Peter's instructions to the first converts in Acts 2:32-47. It is designed to get a person grounded in his/her faith and integrated into a local body.

These studies are arranged in an order, which will hopefully be easy to follow and are designed to last approximately 6 weeks. The companion booklet *Living in the Kingdom* is designed to build upon the foundation this booklet establishes. These two booklets together are designed for disciplers who desire a "primer" which will lead into a longer-term discipleship relationship. For those unequipped to enter into a longer-term discipling relationship, we hope these studies will still enable them to ground new believers in the faith, establishing a foundation which can be built on by others in the church.

The Studies can be used in a couple of ways:

1. We recommended that you use the questions in this booklet as a guide to discuss the recommended passages. You should prepare by praying that the Lord would speak to the new believer through His word. Continue in prayer during the discussion time. Using this method, the new believer needs no preparation, although you might ask him to read the passage in preparation. Remember: The questions in the booklet are to be used to start discussion rather than be seen as a rigid study to which you should adhere. Flexibility is encouraged.
2. A second way this can be used is for you to give the booklet to the new believer. He/she is asked answer the questions in preparation for the time when you two will get together to study the relevant portion. Once again when you get together be flexible and be willing to dig. This approach may be preferred with an older believer.
3. The least preferred way is for you to give the new believer the booklet to work through on his own with no help or follow up.

We hope that this booklet will be helpful to those desiring to obey our Lord's command to "make disciples of the nations".

Study #1: Faith

Read Acts 2:32-37.

1. Faith is only as good as the object in which faith is placed. The object of our faith is Jesus who is the Christ. What did the people of Israel do to Jesus?
2. Why did this happen to him?
3. How did God respond?
4. What did this show about Jesus?
5. Did these people believe? How do you know? (What was their response?)
6. What is the response to Jesus that God is looking for on the part of men?
7. What has been your response?

Study #2: Repentance

Entering the Kingdom of God begins with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said that he came that we might have an abundant life (John 10:10). But the Bible teaches that we are born sinful, cut off from God. Jesus Christ died to pay for that sin and rose from the dead in order to continue a living relationship with those who will come to him by faith. The abundant life consists of living in relationship with our Lord and God. The first step in entering the Kingdom of God is REPENTANCE. In Acts 2:38 Peter gives this as the first instruction to those who were "pierced to the heart".

This study will look at the conversion of the Apostle Paul as he entered the Kingdom of God.

Read Acts 9:1-22.

1. What was Saul's (the apostle Paul's original name) life like before he became a follower of Jesus?
2. In what ways did his life change?
3. What caused the change?
4. One of the first signs that a person has truly met Jesus is repentance: a realization that one has missed the mark and not lived, as God would have wanted him to. What is the evidence that Paul repented of his life? (See vs. 20-30).
5. Have you repented?
6. Once a person has entered the kingdom of God, he begins a new life, which will be progressive, involving daily, ongoing repentance as God reveals things, which are not pleasing to him. When we sin we are to confess our sins (I John 1:9). Have a time of confession for particular sins, which might be getting in the way of your relationship with the Lord.

Study #3: Baptism

When a person comes to Christ they are called to turn from their old way of life (in the Kingdom of this world) to a new way of life (in the Kingdom of God). Repentance involves turning away from the old (Cf. Acts 2:38, 40), whereas Baptism involves embracing the new Kingdom.

Read Acts 2:36-41

1. How did these new followers of Jesus seal their commitment?
2. Look at some other passages in Acts. 8:12, 9:18, 10:48
 - A. Was Baptism the normal for those desiring to follow Jesus?
 - B. When was a person baptized?
3. Read Romans 6:3-5. Baptism is the outward sign of initiation into the kingdom of God. How does Baptism serve as a good picture to identify us with Christ?
4. How does baptism identify us with other members of His Kingdom (Acts 2:41)?
 - A. To whom were the first believers added (Acts 2:41)?
 - B. When were they added?
 - C. Should you be added? To whom should you be added?

Study #4: Growing Together

I. Read Acts 2:41-47. The new believers were added to what became known as the church. This study will focus on what a church is. There is much misunderstanding about what a church is because of the traditions in which we have been raised in a "Christian" society, so we encourage you to approach this with an open mind.

1. What were the activities of the early church as seen in these verses?
2. How could these things help you in your faithful walk with the Lord?
3. How important is meeting together with the believers? (cf. Hebrews 10:23-25)

II. Read Ephesians 4:11-16

1. How do believers grow?
2. How important are other members of the body in your growth?
3. What is the consequence of neglecting the ministry of the body to you? see vs. 14.
4. How would you define membership in the church (v. 16, also Acts 2:41)?
5. What are the benefits of having leadership to coordinate and oversee the activities of the body (vs. 11, 12). See also Hebrews 13:17, Acts 20:28, 29.

6. Do you find the lack of emphasis on ceremony or buildings or clergy in the early church surprising? Why do you suppose there is so little about these things in the New Testament?

Study #5: Church Life: Corporate Worship

I. Worship: Read John 4:20-24

1. What constitutes true worship to God?
2. What does it mean to worship in Spirit? In Truth?
3. Worship ought to occur in private all week long and then corporately as we meet together with the rest of the church. Read Acts 2:42-47. What elements of corporate worship do you see in these verses?
4. What did people do in the assembly meetings of the early church? (I Corinthians 14:26)
5. What part do you need to take in healthy meetings of the body?

II. An important part of corporate worship is the Lord's Supper: Acts 2:42. For background, read Luke 22:19, 20 and I Corinthians 11:17-34.

1. What are the purposes for coming together at the Lord's Supper?
2. What do believers need to watch out for as they assemble together?
3. In what ways is the Lord's Supper important to the life of the church?

Study #6: The Word of God

I. Learning the teachings of Christ was important to the early church (Cf. Acts 2:42). Read John 8:31-36.

1. If you are a true believer, the Holy Spirit will give you a hunger for God's word. Where is the apostles' teaching (mentioned in Acts 2:42) found?
2. What is the difference between reading the word and "holding to the truth" (as one version translated Jn. 8:31)? Or being "devoted" to the teachings (Acts 2:42)? How did it affect their lives?
3. What are some ways you could read the Bible so that it brings about change in your life?

II. Read 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, and Romans 12:1, 2.

1. What is God's plan for our lives?
2. What tool is He going to use? What is our responsibility?
3. Do you have a regular plan of daily Bible study? If not, may we suggest studying one book at a time. Set up a regular time and place where you can take about 10-15 minutes to read and pray each day. (Start with the New Testament and become familiar with this before you begin working with the Old Testament).

The Fellowship of Church Planters has a 30-day study guide through the book of Philippians, which could be used as a starting point in learning how to read the Bible in such a way as it leads to transformation of life.