

### 3. 'Thy Kingdom life'.

We've seen that the kingdom that Daniel and many other Old Testament prophets spoke about would come during the reign of the Romans, when the Messiah arrived. Jesus Himself said, He would 'build His church' and we noted that the words 'kingdom' and 'church' are used to describe one in the same place. We also noted that Jesus said His kingdom would come with power. And on the Day of Pentecost, His kingdom did come with power as the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and 3000 souls were added to the Lord's church.

Today we're going to look at 'kingdom life' and we're going to see that the church is supposed to be a living, active body of believers. A body of believers who not only get together for worship but a body of believers who are trying to take Jesus to the world.

I was reading a church advertisement the other day which I would like to share with you. [Has the heaviness of an old-fashioned church got you weighted down? Try us! We are the New and Improved Lite Church of the Valley. Studies have shown we have 24% fewer commitments. We trim off guilt as we are Low-Cal, low Calvin, that is. We feature a 7.5% tithe, a 35-minute worship service with 7 minute sermons. Next Sunday's sermon is on the feeding of 500.](#)

Now as funny as that is, I think there's a relevant point to it, because more and more churches are becoming less active. Yes, they'll get together for worship each week but that's as far as it goes, there's no group Bible study, there's no real outreach efforts. And so, to a degree, 'kingdom life' isn't very demanding, it's just become a meeting of like-minded people, where people come for a spiritual massage for a couple of hours. And then everyone goes home and goes about their daily lives until the following week.

Now notice what Luke said these baby Christians did as soon as they were born again. [Acts 2:42 "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."](#) Now before we get into this text, please note that this text should read, ["They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers."](#)

Luke says they devoted themselves to four areas and the first area was 'the apostle's teaching'. Now when a baby is born in this world, we all know that, that baby needs to feed straight away or it won't survive. These baby Christians were the same, the first thing they did when they were born again was started to feed on God's Word. And church, it's vitally important that we get together regularly and sit at the feet of this congregation's teachers and feed.

We all know if a baby doesn't feed regularly, they'll suffer from malnutrition and become physically sick and won't develop into a strong human being. But it's the same for Christians, if we don't feed on God's Word regularly, we'll end up becoming spiritually sick and we will end up suffering from spiritual malnutrition.

And sadly, this is a problem that many Christians suffer from, [why?](#) Because the only time they hear anything from God's Word is on Sunday mornings. But there's no excuse loved ones, there's no excuse for you starving yourself, especially since this congregation has many capable men who are more than equipped to feed you. It's not a matter of asking, [is there anyone to teach me?](#) It's a matter of your willingness to ask to be fed.

[Do you want to grow and develop into a strong Christian?](#) Then get regularly at the churches leaders feet and ask them to feed you. You know you're going to get fed every Lord's Day, but why not ask the teacher to come and feed you on another day of the week. I know that some Christians are happy with their level of understanding of God's Word and some Christians are happy to hear the same things taught week in and week out.

But Peter says, [2 Peter 3:18 "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."](#) A baby doesn't feed on milk all of its life and Christians can't feed on spiritual milk all of their life. Ask yourself, [when was the last time you had a good steak?](#) I mean something good to chew over from God's Word. [When was the last time you studied something that took you right out of your comfort zone?](#) And so, the apostles taught these young converts the importance of getting together regularly to feed on God's Word.

And [secondly](#), they devoted themselves to 'the fellowship'. Fellowship is all about being part of a family, living together as a family, sharing as a family. The word fellowship in Greek is 'koinonia' and it means receiving and giving in partnership. But these young Christians weren't just added to the church, they were added to a family. [It's kind of like the man loved football but said he wasn't going to the games any more. He looked around him at a game and there was drinking, profanity, and all kinds of open sin going on all around him. He said to himself, 'what am I doing here?'](#)

Ask yourself loved ones, **what are you doing here? Do you see yourself as part of the church or do you see yourself as part of the church but at the same time as part of a family?** You see, fellowship involves encouragement and availability, where we seek to serve and help each other. **Hebrews 10:24+25** “**Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**” When we meet together, we encourage one another but we also need to make ourselves available to be encouraged and to do the encouraging. And please remember that the word ‘**day**’ here isn’t talking about judgment day but the Lord’s Day.

The **third** thing these young Christians did was devoted themselves to ‘**the breaking of the bread.**’ **Luke 22:19+20** “**He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”**”

When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, He knew very well that us humans are prone to forget. And that’s one of the reasons He asked us to come together as a family to remember Him every Lord’s Day. When we partake of the Supper we’re proclaiming to the world, who we are and to Whom we belong to. We’re proclaiming to the world that Jesus died for us and one day He’s coming back to take us home.

**Have you ever looked at an old photo album and saw a familiar face, you haven’t seen in a while?** Well in many ways that’s what the Lord Supper does, it reminds us of the special relationship we have with Jesus which we must never forget. When we take the bread, we’re reminded of His body and when we take the wine we’re reminded of His blood. That’s why partaking of the Lord’s Supper is a great privilege and honour and should never be taken for granted.

And **finally**, they devoted themselves to ‘**the prayers**’. Now when we’re talking about, ‘**the prayers**’, we’re not talking about an opening prayer or a closing prayer in worship, we’re talking about the prayers of the church. When the early church met, they set aside some time solely for praying, kind of like what we do during our prayer meetings.

Now remember Jesus’ own disciples didn’t know how to pray and so they asked Jesus to teach them. And I’m sure that the apostles would have taught these young Christians how to pray. Because we all know that prayer is important, as the sign outside says, ‘**seven days without prayer makes one weak!**’

God is our Father and we are His children and we have to communicate with each other because prayer develops our relationship with God. **If we never speak to our spouse or never listen to anything our spouse might have to say to us, our marriage relationship will quickly deteriorate.** It’s the same way with God, if we don’t speak to Him regularly, our relationship with Him will deteriorate.

Paul says in **Ephesians 6:18** “**And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.**” We’re not doing God a favour by speaking to Him, prayer isn’t for His benefit, after all He knows what we’re going to say before we say it as **Psalms 139:4** tells us. No! prayer is for our benefit, it reminds us of who we are and who He is as our Father. Prayer reminds us to keep trusting Him for everything in life.

So, let me ask you, **why did these young Christians dedicate themselves to those four activities?** Well, to put it simply, they are a new people, in a new place. **Colossians 1:13** “**For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.**” They’ve just come out of the world and become Christians and now they find themselves in this new kingdom, this new family, the church.

**And what happens when a person becomes a Christian?** When a person becomes a Christian they are instantly engaged in spiritual warfare. **Ephesians 6:10-17** “**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”**”

You see loved ones, I think we forget or refuse to believe that the devil exists and is still active. There was a guy who was getting beat up pretty bad in the boxing ring one time and after the first round, he said to his trainer, 'throw the towel in man, I'm getting killed out there.' But his trainer said, 'oh no you're doing great, he's not laying a hand on you.' And so, the boxer said, 'well can you keep an eye on the referee because somebodies hitting me really hard.'

The devil does exist and there's evidence all around us because people are still getting sick, people are still hurting each other and people are still dying. The devil doesn't want you to study the Bible, the devil doesn't want you to get strength from fellowship. He doesn't want you to remember Jesus at the Supper, He doesn't want you to pray to God.

**Why?** Simply because just as a baby isn't a real threat to anyone, a spiritually immature Christian is no real threat to the devil. The apostles were laying down the foundation for spiritual warfare and teaching these young converts and us today that we need to be prepared. And we get prepared by following their example in those four activities. We learn together regularly, we spend time together regularly, together we remember Jesus regularly and we pray regularly together.

Now look at what Luke tells us next in Acts 2:43-45 "Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need." The word 'awe' means 'fear', and Luke tells us that everyone was frightened because the presence of God was shown through the apostles and the miracles they did. And notice that, 'all the believers were together and had everything in common'. What does that mean? It means as a new family, they met together, they recognised there is strength in coming together. And notice that 'all' of them were together, not just some but all.

A little boy was watching TV one evening when his little sister came in grabbed the TV remote and changed the channel. The brother said, 'hey, what makes you think you can come in here and change the TV channel?' His little sister held up her hand and said, 'these five fingers individually are nothing, but when they come together they are a terrible weapon to behold.'

You see loved ones, there's strength in togetherness, there's encouragement in togetherness. Now remember these first Christians would have been alienated from the Jewish society, they're now outcasts from the Jewish religion. So, in a very real sense, the church had become a support group. And 'everything in common' means they saw themselves as a body with one common bond. Ephesians 4:4-6 "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

And then the church did something that had never been done before in this way, 'they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.' Isn't it interesting that they prepared themselves spiritually first before they did something absolutely alien? Why did they sell their properties and their possession's? Who are those who had a need?

Selling your property wasn't a strange idea in Biblical times because Leviticus 25:23+24 "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land." The Bible says you could sell your property but not permanently because the original owner had the right to buy back the land he sold.

But here in this new kingdom, things have changed, they sold their property and their possessions with no buy back clause, because there is no buy back cause in Christ's kingdom. You see, they sold their properties and their possessions because there was a need.

The Day of Pentecost was one the busiest times of the year and people would come prepared to stay a few days and go home. They would bring their young children with them and maybe some relatives. Now we all budget our holidays don't we, we make sure we have enough money to cover all the costs and maybe take a little extra for emergencies. You see, with all the events surrounding the apostles and the church being established, people have used up their trip budget.

People have stayed longer to see what's going on, these new Christians have stayed longer than they planned and so there is a need. There's a need to supply the basics, like food and water and maybe somewhere to stay.

These first Christians were practising what Paul wrote in **Galatians 6:10** “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” These first Christians did everything they could to help meet the needs of everyone and anyone who was in need. They’ve just become Christians and straight way they’re learning the blessing of giving and sharing.

**Acts 2:46+47** “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Luke tells us they continued to meet together, they ate together, they praised God together and people were impressed. So, impressed that some of them became Christians as the Lord added them to His kingdom.

Now think about the adjustments they had to make in their lives. They used to follow all the laws and decrees of God from the Old Testament but now they don’t. They’ve been told time and time again that the Gentiles and Greeks are unclean and people to be avoided. But now they’re worshipping and enjoying fellowship with the very people they were once told to avoid. They used to meet on the Sabbath for worship but now they’re meeting on the Lord’s Day for worship. They’ve been worshipping God on the Sabbath for centuries and they’re used to getting up on Saturday mornings for worship.

Imagine them being used to going to the temple for worship but now they can worship wherever they like with likeminded people. They’ve been cast out from their Jewish family and been embraced by their new Christian family. But they’re helping and supporting each other as a family should, as a church should.

And notice that they met together **‘everyday’**, **why?** Because they are a new people, living in a new spiritual kingdom and at war in the spiritual realms. They needed the encouragement and strength which comes from being together, a Sunday morning meeting wasn’t enough for them. Getting together for three hours a week wasn’t enough for them.

**Did you know there are over 30 New Testament commands that you cannot obey without a spiritual family?** Loved ones, if we were truly aware that we’re engaged in daily spiritual warfare, my suspicion is, we would meet together as a church family a whole lot more than we do at the moment. You see in many ways I think we’ve become what the early church became, comfortable and forgetful.

**And how do I know they became comfortable and forgetful?** Jesus said to the apostles in **Acts 1:8** “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” They became comfortable in Jerusalem, they’ve been there a while now and the church as a whole has settled into a comfortable routine of worship and enjoying one another’s company. But they forgot their mission, they forgot about Judea and Samaria and the rest of the world.

The church forgot about **Matthew 28:19+20** “Therefore go and make disciples of all 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.”

The church had become comfortable in its ways but forgot about their mission and so God had to allow something to happen to get the church moving in order to share the good news with the rest of the world. After Stephen, had been murdered by the Jews and Saul had given his approval, the Bible says in **Acts 8:1** “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.”

God allowed persecution to come upon the church in order for the church to do their mission which was to get that good news message out to Judea and Samaria. Now look at **Acts 8:4** “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” The mission of the church is God’s mission and that’s to make disciples of all nations by sharing the good news with the world.

But I wonder what God will allow to happen to this congregation in order for us to really reach out to the people within our community with the Gospel. **I mean what is it going to take for the whole church to get actively involved in reaching the lost?** Yes, we can achieve a lot on our own and yes, we can achieve a lot when a few people get together. **But can you imagine how much more we can achieve if we did it as a family, as a church?**

Instead of 500 homes being leafleted, we can do 5000 if everyone was committed and involved. Instead of speaking to 30 people in the street about Jesus, we can speak to 300 people if everyone was committed and involved.

I wonder what it'll take for us to come together as a family, as a church more regularly. I understand that people work on Wednesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings. I understand that we're all tired and some would prefer to watch EastEnders or Coronation Street. I understand that not all of us love painting, cleaning the floor or making meals for others to eat.

But maybe, just maybe knowing that some of us have lost friends and relatives simply because we became Christians. Maybe just knowing that some of us are being persecuted at work or at school simply because we are Christians. Maybe just knowing that some of us are spiritually starving and need some extra spiritual feeding. Maybe just knowing that some of us are weak and tired and we need some encouragement and love a bit more than were receiving at the moment. Maybe just knowing that some of us really struggle with temptation and want to give in to that temptation at times. Maybe when we get to know each other a little bit more, we'll realise just how important coming together outside of worship times really matters.

**Philippians 2:1-4** "Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." Maybe if we understood Paul's words more, we would meet together more regularly as a family, because we understand we're not thinking about ourselves, we're looking out for someone else's interests.

Thy kingdom come, thy kingdom came and kingdom life is a spiritual battle that can't be won on our own. Love ones, we are a part of the greatest living kingdom on the planet, with the greatest King still living. Let's live like we believe it, let's come together like we believe it, let's reach the lost not only because we know that heaven is real but because we know that hell is real too.