"Christ the King"

Matthew 4:17

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell
Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Group Study Introduction

Use the following questions and exercises as your group time allows. Feel free to skip one or more questions in each section as necessary. If you have less then thirty minutes for group discussion, we recommend skipping the "Getting Started" section. Be sure to save time for prayer at the end of your meeting, using the "Strength through Prayer" section.

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell begins this segment by comparing the impression we present as believers to the experience of trying a new restaurant.

- What is your favorite restaurant? Can you remember going to a highly recommended restaurant but walking away disappointed?
- How common do you think it is for non-Christians to be disappointed by the behavior of Christians? How often is their disappointment deserved?

Strength through Scripture:

Open your Bibles to Matthew 4 and have a volunteer read verse 17 out loud.

1) In Part 1 of this series, Joe dealt with the questions of "What on earth is the kingdom of heaven?" and "What on earth does Jesus have to do with the kingdom of heaven?" Now he turns to the third question: "What on earth does that have to do with you?" Read Colossians 1:13. How does this verse speak to this question?

2) Joe states that salvation is so much more than "a free pass out of hell." How common is that concept of salvation in our culture? In the church? In your own life?

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Notes:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."
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3) The fourth question Joe addresses is the hard question of "What on earth does earth have to do with this?" How do you react to Joe's statements that when Adam and Eve were captured by hell, Satan came in and turned everything upside down—and as a result you were born a sinner, entering the world with the stamp of hell on your heart?

4) As a citizen of Christ's here-and-now kingdom, you are viewed by God as forgiven and righteous. You are a part of the earthly expression of all that he is—his values, culture, reign, and rule. How does that make you feel?

5) Construct a list of the leading values and principles of heaven. Contrast each of them to the opposite value of the fallen world (i.e., generosity vs. greed, servanthood vs. self-centeredness).

6) What would it look like for the values, principles, and practices of the kingdom of heaven to be unleashed in your world through you? Where do you need to especially direct your focus—your family, your neighborhood, your workplace? Be specific.

Digging Deeper:

If your group has enough time (i.e., you've listened to the audio on your own), answer one or more of these optional questions.

1) What does Joe mean when he says that we can be a child of the kingdom of heaven and live like hell, and that a lot of churches in America are run more by the values of hell than by the values of heaven?

2) How have you observed the fulfillment of the principle that an individual's refusal to forgive accelerates the darkness of hell?

3) The kingdom of hell and the kingdom of heaven came to a cataclysmic collision at the cross, where Jesus' life was sacrificed to deliver us from the kingdom of hell and make us children of the kingdom of heaven. What is the appropriate response to this on our part?

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Strength through Sharing:

1) Read the first call to action point below. Name a couple of specific ways you intend, through God's Spirit, to demonstrate the values of the kingdom in the coming week.

2) Read the second call to action point below. Do you have an accountability partner or group to join you in this project? If not, how do you feel about finding one?

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments as a group in silent, personal prayer. Thank God for the fact that, as a citizen of Christ's kingdom, you are a part of the earthly expression of all that He is—His values, culture, reign, and rule.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"Thank you, Jesus, for being my King. As a child of the kingdom of heaven, I don't want to live like I'm a child of hell. Use me to bring a taste of heaven to the world around me."

When you are finished with this time for silent, personal prayer, you may want to move into a time of group prayer, praying for one another.

Closing Call to Action:

1) Let's practice one kingdom value or trait a day just to stay in shape. In a world run by greed, we can bring generosity. In a world that is all about me, we can serve others. Instead of revenge, we can bring forgiveness to our world.

2) Team up with a partner (a "Bible buddy") to hold each other accountable in this project to do one kingdom act a day and to bring a wonderful taste of heaven to the world in which we live.

Notes:

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