

WHAT MAKES THE KINGDOM OF GOD VISIBLE IN OUR LIVES?

by David Kornfield

The Kingdom of God is made visible in the CHURCH. Can you see the church? The Kingdom is made real, is fleshed out, in the church. The church is the visible proof that the King reigns (Revelations 19:6-8). Our allegiance to Christ as our King is as strong or as weak as our commitment to His Body, the Church, of which we are part. The fact that He has all authority is revealed among those who together acknowledge Him to be their Head, their Lord, their King (Ephesians 1:19-23; 5:21-32).

The Kingdom of God is made visible in COMMUNITY. Can loving community be seen? The mark of the King's people is love (John 13:34,35), which is the visible evidence of whether Christ reigns in our lives. Having God rule means having Him be the Head of our church family, the community of committed brothers and sisters. Because we totally trust Him, we can risk trusting each other with our weaknesses—and with our strengths! When Christ is King, loneliness is banished as He draws us into His loving community.

The Kingdom of God is made visible in His GOVERNMENT. Can Christ's government be seen? Have you ever heard of a kingdom without a visible government? The Kingdom of God is made real and made visible in His earthly government. However, instead of an authority that rules by power and lords it over others, Christ's government is made up of servants. These servants, called elders (I Peter 5:1-5), are given the responsibility of seeing all who are in their care grow into godly maturity. The King's government functions this way because the King Himself did not come to this world to be served, but to serve and give His life so that we might come to godly maturity (Matthew 20:25-28; Ephesians 5:25-27).

The Kingdom of God is made visible in MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENT. Can you see commitment? Citizenship in the heavenly Kingdom is made visible by committed membership in Christ's church. Commitment to the King is incomplete without commitment to His Body, and commitment to His Body is impossible without commitment to Him. Kingdom commitment is fleshed out in church membership which entails responsibility, accountability, and submission to spiritual authority. Without defining who is part of this local family, committed care and discipline are difficult, if not impossible.

The Kingdom of God is made visible in SPIRITUAL GIFTS. Can you see spiritual gifts? When the King ascended on high, He gave gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8). These gifts are the visible expression of the King's power, released in the Church. These gifts equip us to build up the Body of Christ, the outpost of the kingdom here on earth (Ephesians 4:11-16). We show that we are the King's people through the loving use of the Spirit's gifts in the church.

The Kingdom of God is made visible in our STEWARDSHIP OF PHYSICAL POSSESSIONS. Can you see physical possessions? This is where the Kingdom gets nitty-gritty [very real to daily life]. Kingdom commitment touches each individual's time, money, energy, and possessions. Because none of us have anything the King has not entrusted to us, we are but stewards of our homes, our cars, our possessions, and our money. All that we have is the King's and belongs to the Kingdom, though we may be asked to take care of it. Thus, if anyone in the church has a need, we all together seek to give of our possessions and money to meet that

need, for in the economy of the Kingdom, it is not intended that anyone have material needs!

The Kingdom of God is made visible in our WORSHIP. Can you see worshipping people? There is little that will so demonstrate our love and allegiance for the King as when we set aside all else to focus our thoughts in loving adoration on Him. The corporate worship of the church as we gather regularly at the throne of the King is the high point of the individual believer's entire life of worship. Created to glorify and enjoy the King forever, the first priority of the King's people is to worship Him!

The Kingdom of God is made visible in the SACRAMENTS. Can you see baptism and the Lord's Supper? Baptism is the public acknowledgment to Christians and non-Christians, to God and to Satan, that Christ is King in our lives. Baptism is the visible expression of the miracle of being born into the Kingdom of God. The Lord's Supper (which we could call the King's Supper), is when the King is present in a special way in the midst of His people. In our church it is a weekly act of bringing not only our offering of praise and thanksgiving, but also our very selves, to the King.

The Kingdom of God is made visible in our WITNESS. Can you see and hear a witness? We believe that true freedom exists only in God's Kingdom.

We try to communicate that, both through our lives and through our words, to see the slaves of this world find the freedom that has been given to us. Knowing that those who are not in Christ's Kingdom are in Satan's dominion, we actively seek to persuade people to choose to follow the one true and perfect King. Through the church's love and unity, unbelievers will recognize the reality of who Jesus is (John 13:34,35; 17:21-23)—the reality that He is King. We seek to win people to the Lord not so much because of all the benefits which will be theirs, but because only through submission to the King can they live in keeping with reality.

The Kingdom of God is made visible in SPIRITUAL WARFARE. Can you sense spiritual warfare? When Christ's Kingdom, fleshed out in the church, invades Satan's kingdom, the sparks fly! While Satan prefers to drug churches and Christians with a subtle apathy, or deceive them with a false spirituality, or divide them through His accusations, He is not above actual, downright confrontation when he gets desperate. Because Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18), Satan is a defeated foe. Yet he still has power and can both oppress and possess people. When the church is launching a successful attack on Satan's realm, it can be sure there will be a counterattack because Satan, our Adversary, does not go down easy! The church's confidence is that the battle is not hers, but Christ's; just as Christians alone are inadequate to oppose Satan, so he is adequate to oppose Jesus Christ.

The Kingdom of God is made visible in UNITY AMONG CHURCHES. Can you see when churches cooperate? Can you see the results when pastors meet together regularly and have good relationships with each other? Jesus prayed for unity among His followers, that the world might believe that God had sent Him. This unity is to be more than theological; it is also to be personal and experiential. As local redeemed communities, we are all called to be one as part of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Such unity will stand in stark contrast to the spirit of division that opposes God's will and permeates the world around us.

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