

WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The fact that you are reading this material indicates that you want to be a follower of Jesus Christ. At some point in your life — perhaps recently — you gave your life to God. Perhaps on the Alpha course, during a church meeting, or perhaps on your own you asked for God's grace to come into your life. You were ready for change and trusted Jesus Christ to give new life to you.

When you travel to another country, you need a passport. And in order to live there permanently, you need to become a citizen of this state. It also means that you are swearing allegiance to your country and its government or king. Becoming a citizen of a new country means giving up loyalty to your previous country. When you repent of your sins and ask Jesus to save you, spiritual kingdoms change. Jesus is your passport to God's Kingdom. Colossians 1: 13-14 says that God delivered "us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption by His blood and the remission of sins." Jesus is our new King.

Some of your values are already aligned with God's ways. Some are not yet. God is calling us to conform to the new customs and freedom of the new kingdom. Have you renounced your belonging (citizenship) to the "kingdom of this world"? As you review this material over the next 4 weeks with a mentor, you will see that you have been given a "new birth" in the kingdom. This is why Jesus said that in order to enter the kingdom one must be "born again" or "born from above" (John 3: 3).

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven is a favorite topic in Jesus' sermons (Read the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). This idea originated in the Old Testament and is described throughout the Bible. Jesus taught on how to enter the kingdom, the ways of the kingdom, and the enemy of the kingdom.

We tend to think of a kingdom as a nation ruled by a monarch - like old Britain with King Arthur at the round table. In fact, the kingdom is where the king has power and dominion.

When a king has influence over a place or people, then the kingdom comes.

The kingdom of God is not a place, but it can come to places. The kingdom of God is where Jesus is honored as King and obeyed. It is in every person who loves Jesus as God's only Son and makes Jesus their personal Lord. Jesus taught us to pray: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." - Matthew 6:10. When God's will is done on earth, the kingdom comes. When Jesus is honored, the kingdom comes. Where there is justice and compassion, kingdom comes. When people are fed, covered, educated, healed, the kingdom comes. When sin is stopped and demons lose their grip, the kingdom comes. The church is not God's kingdom, but it is an assembly of citizens of the kingdom for the purposes of King Jesus Christ (more on this later). Revelation 1: 6 says that Christ made "us kings and priests to God and His Father."

OLD AND NEW

When we are born again and follow Jesus, much about us changes radically. As one Christian convert said of this, "I wonder what I have been doing with my life for the last 35 years!?" He experienced a radical world and got purpose in his life. Another said, "I am happier now when I am sad than when I was happy before."

We read in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, now everything is new. " Being born again is the beginning, but some Christians mistakenly think that this is the end, and we just "have to hold on" until we get to heaven. How boring! Just as there is a huge difference between being just born and becoming mature, there is also a huge difference between being born again and growing into spiritual maturity. There are many "aged Christians" who have not yet grown up in the Lord. You may have met some of them.

Also, even though we are now a new creature, sometimes we fail. Deep change takes time. Don't be disappointed if you behave the same way. We are in the process of growing with Jesus. Living in the strength and goodness of our King is a lifelong process. This book is about that. The Holy Spirit guides us, and He has the power to change us. It's great that everyone plays a significant role in God's Kingdom!

USEFUL TIPS

Working on Passport can be a life-changing process for you. But usually people find it difficult to finish what they start. Have you noticed this? You can use this book alone, but you will achieve more if you work with other Christians. Plus you have a better chance of completing this process. This was our intention when writing the book. Another follower of Jesus who helps you find your path to the Kingdom during these few weeks of using the Passport is someone who has been a believer for a while and knows how to help you along the way. We call them mentors. They are imperfect - they just know the Lord Jesus a little longer and have permission from the church to help others. This person's goal is to answer some of the questions that arise as you learn to hear the voice of God. This person will

encourage you, pray for you - sometimes even challenge you. But he or she will only act in this role if you want them to. You can stop this process at any time.

Another thing that can help you as you grow is a small group of Christians who meet regularly to strengthen one another. This can happen in different ways. Many churches have small groups that are like families - 8-12 people. In this book, we call this a home group. Home groups usually meet every week for prayer, evangelism, and spiritual exercises. If possible, become part of such a small group. And you may soon become a mentor for new believers in your group yourself.

PASSPORT IN THE GROUP PLUS INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Some churches use the Passport in a group where several Mentors and disciples gather. During the first hour of the meeting, one person prepares using the teachings of the week, and then Mentors and Disciples can spend the second hour in a one-to-one discussion of how the week has gone. This method allows you to have communication as a group, as well as have personal time for the Mentor and the Disciple.

HABIT FORMATION

One of the goals of Passport is to help you form the habit of spending time with the Lord every day. The goal is not to find all the answers, but to develop a true friendship with Jesus - by talking and listening to God. Trust the Bible, the example of Jesus, and the centuries-old experience of Christians: Form a daily habit of prayer and Bible reading. Choose a time so that you can pray every day. Try to guard this time. Where can you be free from everything that distracts you? As much as you can, do it "in the same place, at the same hour." You are forming a life habit that will help you know God more. Do not lag behind for a few days and then try to fit weekly meditations on the Word into one day. Better to let your Mentor know that you have been busy and that you will start over next week.

MEMORISING BIBLE VERSES

Make four cards. Write the verse of the week on this card each week. Start memorizing the new verse of the week right away. Carry this card with you everywhere. When you get the opportunity (in a line at the store, on a walk), look at the card. Repeat this verse over and over. Start by repeating the Scripture, then the first phrase, then the second, etc. until you can connect all the lines and repeat the whole verse. Memorize as accurately as you can. Underline the verse in the Bible. Repeat the verse from the past week each week. The goal is to have learned all the verses by the end of the course. May they stay with you forever!