



Small Group Guide: The Forgotten Jesus

“What is The Kingdom of God Really About?”

Icebreaker

Think about someone whose voice you would recognize instantly, a parent, a close friend, a mentor. What is it about that voice that makes it so distinct to you?

Key Scripture

Matthew 8:1-4 CSB

When he came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. Right away, a man with leprosy came up and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Reaching out his hand, Jesus touched him, saying, “I am willing; be made clean.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus told him, “See that you don’t tell anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Main Takeaways

- **The Kingdom of God Is Misunderstood - Then and Now.** First-century Jewish audiences expected the kingdom of God to arrive through military conquest, with a Messiah who would overthrow Rome and establish Israel's dominance. Today, many Christians assume the kingdom of heaven is simply a far-off destination we go to after death. Jesus challenged both of those assumptions.
- **Passive Waiting Is the Enemy of Kingdom Living.** Both misunderstandings, waiting for a conquering Messiah or waiting to be taken away to heaven, produce the same result: passivity. Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is active, present, and participatory.
- **The Kingdom Is Here and Now, Not Just There and Then.** For Jesus and the apostles, the kingdom of heaven was not a distant place but a present reality. It is where the presence of God intersects with everyday life. The first-century Jewish mind understood heaven as another dimension, near, real, and accessible, not a faraway location in the sky.
- **Jesus Is the Temple.** The temple was the place where heaven met earth, where God's presence dwelt among his people. When Jesus came, he fulfilled and replaced the temple. As Paul teaches in his letters, believers are now the temple of the Holy Spirit. God no longer dwells in a building made by human hands; he dwells in his people.

- **Hearing God's Voice Requires Time With God.** Just as sheep learn to recognize their shepherd's voice through consistent closeness, believers learn to hear God's voice through intentional time spent in his presence. Silence, solitude, and Scripture are not wasted time, they are how we train our ears to recognize the accent of the Holy Spirit.
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Discussion Questions

What Is the Kingdom of God?

- Before listening to this podcast, how would you have defined or described the kingdom of heaven? Has your understanding shifted at all? If so, how?
- The podcast describes two common misunderstandings of the kingdom of God, the first-century Jewish expectation of military conquest, and the modern Christian idea of a far-off heaven we escape to after death. Which of those two misunderstandings do you think is more common in the church today? Why?
- Both misunderstandings were said to produce the same result: passivity. Do you agree with that? Can you think of ways that a "waiting" mentality has shown up in your own spiritual life or in your church community?

The Temple and the Presence of God

- The podcast explains that the temple was understood as the single point on earth where heaven met earth, where God's presence dwelled. How does it change your understanding of yourself as a believer to know that you are now described in Scripture as the temple of the Holy Spirit?
- The discussion touched on the idea that building or rebuilding a physical temple would imply that what Jesus accomplished on the cross was insufficient. How does the finished work of Christ change the way we think about sacred spaces, sacred rituals, or the idea of "getting close to God"?
- If God's presence now dwells in his people rather than in a building, what does that mean for how you carry yourself throughout an ordinary day, at work, at home, in your neighborhood?

Time, Presence, and the Kingdom Now

- The podcast made the point that the phrase "doing time" reflects a mindset of passivity and survival rather than kingdom engagement. Whether or not you have experienced incarceration, in what areas of your life have you found yourself just "doing time" waiting for a season to end rather than being present and purposeful in it?
- Ephesians 5:15 instructs readers to walk carefully, making the best use of the time. What is one specific area of your life right now where you sense God calling you to redeem the time rather than waste it?
- The podcast used the illustration of burning or throwing away things connected to a former way of life. Is there something, a habit, a relationship, a piece of media, a mindset, that you have been holding onto that is keeping you stuck in the past and unable to see the kingdom of God at work in your present?

Hearing the Voice of God

- The podcast offered the illustration of sheep on an Irish hillside, each responding only to their own shepherd's voice while thousands of others remained still. How would you honestly evaluate your ability right now to hear and recognize God's voice? What has helped you grow in that? What has hindered it?
 - Robby described spending hundreds of hours in silence with the Lord and sometimes feeling like he "got nothing" only to be reminded by the Holy Spirit, "You got me, and I finally got you." Has there been a time in your life when simply being in God's presence, without a clear word or feeling, turned out to be more significant than you realized at the time?
 - The podcast described silence and solitude as a kind of spiritual muscle training, that time spent in God's presence makes you more sensitive to his voice throughout the rest of your day. What would it look like practically for you to build that rhythm into your week?
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Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying as a group over this question: "Lord, what does your kingdom look like in and through us, right here, right now?" Allow a few moments of silence before anyone speaks. Let the quiet itself be part of the prayer.