



WE ARE
KINGSLAND

WRITTEN BY DR. STEVE JONES

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Review the context and big picture every week – The goal of a book study is not just to learn each individual lesson, but to build understanding of the Bible, how it fits together, and how to study it.

Try not to use this guide as a script. The purpose of this material isn't to give you exactly what to say. Rather it is to give you the content you need to structure and develop your own lessons. Teach as much as you feel is important for your class. Feel free to go off topic if your own study leads you to approach the passage in a slightly different direction.

Don't feel like you have to cover everything. There is a lot of material in each lesson. Some classes like to cover a lot of ground. Other classes like to camp on one point and drill deep. Start by teaching the Main Point, then teach the Main Bullet Points. Use the extra detail and discussion questions as you see fit. The goal is to generate discussion, specifically regarding life-application. So don't worry if you don't get all the way through a lesson.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 Apr 16** | Kingsland's Mission: Inviting All People | Matthew 28:16-20
- 7 Apr 23** | Kingsland's Vision: 1M7 | Matthew 13:31-32
- 11 Apr 30** | Kingsland Core Values: Grace-Filled Truth | James 3:1-12
- 15 May 7** | Kingsland Core Values: Empowered Homes | Colossians 3:18-21
- 19 May 14** | Kingsland Core Values: Spirit-led Community | Acts 2:42
- 23 May 21** | Kingsland Core Values: Collective Legacy | Ephesians 4:1-16
- 28 May 28** | Kingsland Core Values: Selfless Influence | Philippians 2:1-11

APR 16 | KINGSLAND'S MISSION

INVITING ALL PEOPLE | MATTHEW 28:16-20

“Inviting All People to Experience True Fulfillment In Jesus Christ One Home at a Time.”

Though we articulate the mission in a way specific to Kingsland and Katy, TX, our mission is rooted in the Great Commission given by Jesus to all his followers in the last few verses of Matthew. We call it the Great Commission because Jesus commissions us as his ambassador and envoys to bring others into the kingdom. As we think about our mission, let's see how it expresses the larger mission given to every believer by our Lord.



WATCH THIS VIDEO ▶▶▶
About Kingsland's Mission
Inviting All People



OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE
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SOURCE OF OUR MISSION - THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

When Jesus meets his disciples, he starts by telling them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” In Matt 4:8-9, during the temptations, Satan offered Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” if he would worship him. Jesus, by enduring the cross, has gained far more. He has all the authority in heaven and earth. What this means is that he is the rightful Lord of everything. Abraham Kuyper once famously said, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!” And he is calling all people to enter into right relationship with their true Lord. The great commission is about Jesus enlisting us in the great ongoing mission of announcing the Lordship of Jesus and calling all people to follow him.

SUBSTANCE OF OUR MISSION

After announcing his authority, he gives his followers a command.

Go and Make Disciples – Though in English, it reads like two commands, the word Go is actually a participle...going. Make Disciples is the command. A better translation would be: “As you go, make disciples” or “Wherever you go, make disciples.” Jesus is telling his

followers to look for opportunities to make more followers of Jesus wherever they happen to find themselves.

Disciple literally means student. Jesus had called disciples to himself. Now he was calling his disciples to make more disciples, students. He goes on to describe in detail who and how.

Of All the Nations – Jesus came as the Jewish messiah to fulfill God’s promises to Israel. He also came to fulfill the mission God gave to Israel to be a light to the nations. Now with the authority Jesus has, He calls all people everywhere to come into his kingdom. He is building a kingdom that reaches beyond the borders of a single nation. Revelation 5:9 says that gathered around the throne in heaven will be people “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

Baptizing Them – Declaring Your Allegiance – Baptism in the early church was not some additional act that was performed after your profession of faith; it was the profession of faith itself. By being baptized, you were taking a stand on the side of Christ, planting your flag, declaring your allegiance and your intent to serve your Lord and become like Him. We live in a world today where taking sides is frowned upon. Sometimes it’s hard to tell who the Christians are even in church—no more anonymous Christians. A disciple takes a stand and declares to other Christians and the world his intention to follow and become like Christ.

Obedient – Follow Your Lord – Jesus says at the beginning of the Great Commission that He possesses all authority. Authority is the right, because of one’s position, to give commands and enforce obedience. Most of us don’t like the idea of authority or of someone else telling us what to do. This creates a problem because Jesus possesses authority, Jesus gives commands, and Jesus makes demands. A disciple is someone who obeys, someone who recognizes, and willingly submits to the authority of Christ.

The good news is that we have a loving lord who desires the best for his followers. We serve a Lord who says in Matthew 11:28-30 28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” He is gentle. His yoke is easy. His burden is light. His commands are not to crush us but to free us and help us find joy, purpose, love, and rest...true fulfillment

Teaching Them – Renew Your Mind – But obedience does not come naturally. Our sinful selves kick against the goads, telling us to rebel. Jesus tells us in the Great Commission that one becomes better able to obey through being taught: “TEACHING them to obey all that I have commanded you.” A disciple is, therefore, someone being instructed how

to live as Christ commanded. Again, we resist. We often want Christianity to be about feelings, fellowship, and fun. We distinguish between head and heart, then exalt the heart over the head. We stress the importance of experience over instruction. Unfortunately, the Bible is crystal clear on this point: Christianity is furthered, and disciples are made through teaching. Romans 12:2 reads, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” 1 Peter 1:13 adds: “Gird your minds for actions.” Colossians 2:6-7: “Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were INSTRUCTED, and overflowing with gratitude.” Ephesians 4:20 “But you have not learned Christ in this way.” The list could go on. The critical thing to realize is that teaching (instruction, training, etc.) is not optional. A disciple has been transformed by having his mind renewed through powerful teaching and instruction.

SUPPORT FOR OUR MISSION

After revealing his authority and commissioning us with a critical mission, Jesus gives us the support we need to be effective as we go. The great commission and the entire book of Matthew end with Jesus offering the comforting reassurance that “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” This promise repeats a similar phrase in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.”

Jesus himself promises that he will be with us wherever we go. We can be confident knowing that the one who has commissioned us also accompanies us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is a better translation for “Go and make disciples?” How can we learn to make disciples wherever we go?
2. What does it mean that Jesus has authority?
3. How can we make Jesus’ command in the great commission a priority?
4. How can we be a part of making disciples?
5. How can we rely on the comfort offered by Jesus’ promise always to be with us?

APR 23 | KINGSLAND'S VISION

1M7 | MATTHEW 13:31-32

At Kingsland, we have a vision to see one million and seven homes transformed by the power of the gospel. A million might seem like a daunting goal or an overwhelming number. That is the reason for the seven. We don't need to focus on a million. If we all start small by focusing on the seven homes God places on our hearts, we will see God do amazing things.



WATCH THIS VIDEO ▶▶▶
About Kingsland's Vision
1M7



OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE
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Thinking small to accomplish something big is more than a clever gimmick; it is the primary way the kingdom of God grows. In Matthew 13:33-34, Jesus told a parable about how his Kingdom grows: “31 He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” Perhaps, as we look closer at this parable, we will gain inspiration to play our part in the small but growing Kingdom of God.

THE KINGDOM GROWS BEYOND OUR EXPECTATIONS

Jesus says that his Kingdom might look small initially, but it will grow into a big thing, something you were not expecting it to turn into. He uses the image of a mustard seed. People have misspent a fairly large amount of time trying to see if Jesus was accurate in claiming the mustard seed as the smallest seed. Whether a smaller seed can be found doesn't defeat the point that the mustard seed is tiny. In common wisdom and among the rabbis and teachers of Jesus's day, the mustard seed was considered the smallest seed. It was a common theme to compare something to a mustard seed. Jesus, in fact, does it a couple of times.

The point is that the mustard plant begins as one of the smallest seeds. And though it is just an herb, it eventually grows to be the size of a small tree. In Judaea, mustard plants were documented to grow upwards of 8, 10, or even 12 feet tall. The Kingdom begins inconspicuously, but its end will be great. It may currently comprise a rag-tag bunch of fishermen and a former tax collector instead of the powerful, wealthy elite, but it will one day grow beyond its humble beginnings.

Sometimes, especially when we pray, we prepare ourselves to be underwhelmed by God. We almost expect God not to answer our prayers or do less than we were expecting. But the continual promise of scripture is that God wants to show us his plans are greater, not less than ours. In Ephesians 3:20, Paul describes God as “Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.” God is able to do not just more, but exceedingly more than we ask or even think is possible. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:9, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

We should not be shocked when God transforms something small and insignificant into something useful in his hands. God has been doing this since the beginning with man. In Psalm 8:3-6, the psalmist realizes this. He writes, “3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.” Man is nothing compared to God. But God raises us up, crowns us, and gives us a part to play in His creation.

THE KINGDOM GROWS BY GOD'S POWER

God takes small things and exalts them so that people will realize the surpassing power is from God, not men. In a passage similar to this parable, God, in Ezekiel 17:22-24, talks about taking the smallest sprig of a cedar tree and doing the same thing with it as the mustard seed: “22 Thus says the Lord God, “I will also take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and set it out; I will pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. 23 On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches. 24 All the trees of the field will know that I am the Lord; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will perform it.”

The ultimate goal of God using the mustard seed and the tiniest cedar sprig is for us to realize that God did it, not us. He exalts the lowly and humbles the exalted. He does so not to shame or bully us but to teach us to trust Him, not ourselves. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29: “27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God.”

We all like to be on the winning team, so we sometimes look to join the one most likely to win. This principle doesn't work with spiritual things. God frequently takes what may not look like much to the world and uses it to do amazing things. That is why there are frequent reminders in scripture not to trust in appearances. In 1 Samuel 16:7, during the selection of David, God tells Samuel, “God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” In Zechariah 4, God tells lowly Zerubbabel that He will rebuild the temple. Then to remind him that this task was assigned not because Zerubbabel was great but because God wanted to show His power through Zerubbabel, He tells him to rely on God and not to be afraid of a humble beginning. Zechariah 4:6, 8-10 says, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts...”

8 Also the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 9 “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. 10 For who has despised the day of small things?”

God does great things through seemingly insignificant people. We, like Zechariah, should trust not in our own strength but in God, and we should not despise the day when things seem small because God is in the habit of turning those small things into great things.

THE KINGDOM GROWS TO OFFER REFUGE

There is another detail in this parable that is important to notice. Parables aren't exactly allegories – not everything stands for something else – but in this case, the birds of the air coming to nest in its branches is significant because it is a phrase repeated from the Ezekiel passage. The birds coming to nest reminds us that the purpose of the tree's growth is to provide a home and shelter. The Kingdom Jesus came to bring is meant to be a refuge for people to find hope.

Many leaders today try to use the church as an instrument of their own social advancement or as a means to draw attention to themselves. This is what Jesus says about such people in Matthew 7:22-23: “22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in

Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’
23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you.’”

The purpose of the Kingdom isn’t to allow us to construct mini-empires for ourselves but rather to be used as instruments of God’s blessing to those who need it. When the Kingdom reaches its full potential, like the mustard tree, it draws people looking for safe places to rest, recover, and call home.

In the parable, Jesus uses the birds as a way to remind the Jews of His day that God’s plan never was just about them but always was for them to be a lighthouse and blessing for the whole world. In Genesis 22:18, God promised Abraham, “18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

The Jews of Jesus’s day had intentionally isolated themselves. They thought God chose them; therefore, they were more important than others. Jesus reminds the Jews that the purpose of his Kingdom is to draw all people to himself so that they can find the true fulfillment that can only be found there.


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What limits do we sometimes put on God? Have you ever seen God do something beyond your expectations?
2. Have you ever seen God use someone or something unexpected to do great things? Have you ever seen something that could only be accounted for by the power of God? How do we sometimes rely on our own power, not on God’s?
3. What does it mean to not “despise the day of small things?”
4. Have you seen people try to use the Kingdom of God to construct little kingdoms for themselves? Or use the Kingdom of God to benefit themselves?
5. What does it mean that the Kingdom of God exists to offer refuge? What refuge does the Kingdom of God offer? What other places do people go to for refuge?


APR 30 | KINGSLAND CORE VALUES

GRACE-FILLED TRUTH | JAMES 3:1-12

In addition to our mission and vision, Here at Kingsland, we prioritize five core values: Grace-filled Truth, Empowered Homes, Spirit-led Community, Collective Legacy, and Selfless Influence. Over the next few weeks, we will look at each one more closely to understand the Biblical basis for each and discuss how we can learn to live it out.



WATCH THIS VIDEO ▶▶▶
About Kingsland's Core Values
Grace-Filled Truth



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Powerful speech is a part of the image of God on us. Some think that it's the most essential part of us. One of the chief attributes of God is that He speaks. Think of Genesis 1. How does God create the world? He speaks it into existence. He says words and things happen. Think of how Jesus is described in John 1. He is the Word of God to us.

Because God is perfect, holy, and loving, what He says brings life. Because we are created in God's image, our words also have power. Because we are fallen and broken, what we say is a bit of a mixed bag of life and death. One of the best places to look for how to learn to use our words to bring life is James 3:1-12. In this passage, James shows us the incredible power of words and what they reveal about their speaker and how we can submit even our tongue to the lordship of Jesus.

James frames his appeal in terms of teachers. He isn't telling people not to become teachers. The church needs teachers. He is telling people to take talking seriously. When we communicate, especially when we communicate the truths of God, we are engaged in a serious business with real consequences.

YOUR TONGUE IS A RUDDER: WORDS ARE POWERFUL (V2-5)

James starts by saying that words are more than serious; they are powerful. James, speaking hyperbolically, says that we all stumble, but if someone can bridle his tongue, that person is as good as perfect. James is saying that our mouths are the origin and

beginning of most of our sin. With it, we start huge problems, and with it, we can avoid them.

He gives two examples of how small things guide the paths of larger things. A bit weighs a fraction of the horse's weight and is a relatively small piece of equipment. Put it in the horse's mouth, and you can lead it wherever you want. Also, a rudder is tiny compared to the rest of the ship. But you can guide the ship wherever you want if you control the rudder.

The tongue is like that. It's small but mighty. Focus on controlling it, and you will steer the rest of your life in a new direction.

YOUR TONGUE IS A FIRE: WORDS ARE DANGEROUS (V6-8)

James now moves to the core of his appeal: words are dangerous. Though James speaks of the tongue like it is a part of the body distinct from us and out of our control, we must not be lulled into thinking there is nothing we can do about it. The tongue is a symbol of our sinfulness. The extent to which you have trouble controlling your tongue is the extent to which sin needs to be dealt with in your life.

Think of how we excuse our flippant speech or even how we are undisciplined or thoughtless about what we say. "It's no big deal." Or "I'm sorry; I just have a short fuse." Look at the words James uses to describe the tongue: the very world of iniquity, defiles the entire body, sets your life on fire, is set on fire by hell, a restless evil, and full of deadly poison. If James had just used the adjectives and made you guess what he was describing, would you have said "the tongue?" Most of us wouldn't. This shows how real the problem is. We have made peace with and excused and disregarded something that is a primary conduit of evil into our lives and through us into the world.

YOUR TONGUE IS A WELL: WORDS ARE REVEALING (V9-12)

James finishes by discussing the revelatory power of words. What you say reveals what is in your heart. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." What comes out of your mouth indicates what is inside you. If you carry a cup of coffee and something bumps you, coffee spills over the edge. We like to pretend that words said in the heat of the moment or under duress aren't indicators of who we really are. But perhaps they are. Squeeze a tube of toothpaste, and what's inside comes out. Our words show us what is inside us. When life bumps or squeezes us, what comes out is an indicator of what is inside.

As CS Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*, "what a man does when he is taken off his guard

is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is. Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth? If there are rats in a cellar, you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats: it only prevents them from hiding.”

We are great at putting on facades to hide what is inside. Our words, especially those we say under stress, reveal the true nature of our hearts.

APPLICATION

So what are we supposed to do about it? James isn't trying to crush us under a burden of performance-based righteousness. He isn't trying to guilt us into being good enough, or shame us into shrugging our shoulders and walking away saying, "I guess my life is on fire, my soul is full of salt water, it's all my fault, and there is nothing I can do about it."

I think there are some things that we can do in response to the challenge of this passage:

1. Take the Test – Use our words to diagnose what is happening in our souls. We sometimes wonder what is wrong with our lives. Well, listen to the things that come out of your mouth. What do they indicate? Are you full of complaining or comparison or anger or jealousy or greed? What do you talk about most? Again, don't beat yourself up or excuse; diagnose. Use your words as symptoms of your heart problem. What do you see?

2. Take it Seriously – James spends most of his time convincing us that words have power. We need to heed his exhortation. Take seriously the power words have to bring life or death, to bless or curse. This isn't a call to scrutinize every word everyone says all the time to make sure they are speaking theologically or politically correct. It simply means to be intentional about the words we use and to practice choosing them carefully to bless others. In Ephesians 4:29, Paul writes, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear."

3. Take Steps – I think James also intends for us to take steps in trying to tame our tongues. The tongue indicates what is in the heart. But James also suggests that what we talk about has a way of training our hearts. In Philippians 2:14, Paul says, "14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing." He isn't saying that it's only to grumble as long as you do it in your heart and not out loud. He is saying that if we take steps to force ourselves to keep from grumbling with our lips, we will find ourselves complaining less in our hearts.

4. Take it to God – Perhaps the most overlooked verse in this passage is v8, "But no one can

tame the tongue.” It’s dangerous; it produces death; it needs to be controlled. But you cannot do it. James isn’t saying that we need to give up. He is trying to make us realize that we cannot do it alone. We need divine help. We need to pray the words of Psalm 141:3, which says, “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.” Learning to rely on God for strength and help is essential. Lean on yourself, and you will fail. Lay it before His feet, and see if He doesn’t help you reign in your tongue and start doing good with your words.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does “grace-filled truth” mean? How do we live it out?
2. How do we sometimes excuse our inability to control our tongues? What justification do we give when we hurt people with our careless words?
3. What part of James’s critique of our speech is most challenging for you to hear? Why?
4. How can we use words to diagnose our hearts?
5. How can we take our words seriously without falling into guilt or condemnation? How can we learn to take our speech problems to Jesus?

MAY 7 | KINGSLAND CORE VALUES

EMPOWERED HOMES | COLOSSIANS 3:18-21

In addition to our mission and vision, Here at Kingsland, we prioritize five core values: Grace-filled Truth, Empowered Homes, Spirit-led Community, Collective Legacy, and Selfless Influence. Over the next few weeks, we will look at each one more closely to understand the Biblical basis for each and discuss how we can learn to live it out.

	WATCH THIS VIDEO ▶▶▶ About Kingsland's Core Values <i>Empowered Homes</i>		OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE Kingsland.org/WeAreKingsland
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Having an empowered home means learning to live out our new life in Christ at home. I had initially thought about looking at Deuteronomy 6, where Moses tells the people of Israel that the home is the primary place where our identity is lived. I settled, however, on Colossians 3 because in this portion of Colossians Paul takes the theology and makes it practical and applicable for the home.

Paul began the book of Colossians by laying a foundation for the Christian life in what Christ has done for us and who we are because of that. He gets more and more practical as the book progresses, forcing the Colossians to consider how the truth of the Gospel affects every aspect of their lives. Chapter 2 ends by saying, "If you have died with Christ, live it like. If you have been raised with Christ, live like it." He then proceeded to give some big-picture examples of what that looked like (set your mind on things above, seek things that are above). He then continued to boil it down further to specific things believers need to Put aside and Put on. Old things they are going to stop doing and new things that they need to start doing. He ends this book with some incredibly practical and sometimes controversial statements about how to live out the new life in Christ. It is likely to make us uncomfortable and step on our toes. But if we want empowered homes, this is where it starts.

It doesn't get more practical than the home. Paul gives specific instructions about living out the new life in Christ with the people we live with. He is giving the attributes of an empowered home. Though Paul might address the specific command to a specific

member of the household, it is important to realize that these are attributes anyone who wants an empowered home should learn to develop. As we look at the list, we will see that we all have to do them to God, so we have better start by learning to do them towards each other.

EMPOWER HOMES REQUIRE SUBMISSION (V18)

This one always causes problems. Some think it proves that the Bible treats women as inferior to men and therefore is a relic of bygone times. That is an extreme position. Here are a couple of things to keep in mind as we seek to understand what Paul says here:

Subjection does not mean subjugation. Submission is a closer synonym. It means humbly placing someone else's needs above your own. Evidently, in many early Christian communities, Women had taken the freedom and equality they found in Christianity to an extreme. Mad about a world that considered them inferior, sometimes they interpreted the freedom and equality they found in Christianity as a reason to turn the tables and dominate their husbands. Paul reminds them that they still have an obligation to love (v14) and that love means putting others' needs first.

We all need to know how to submit. Submission is something that we are all supposed to do toward God. James 4:7 says, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Submission is something we are supposed to do to each other. In Ephesians 5:19, Right before Paul tells the wives to submit, or be subject to their husbands, he says, "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." Submission is something we are all supposed to do for each other. Paul here isn't giving husbands an excuse for dominating their wives. He simply reminds the wives that they are still obligated to their husbands to love and put them first.

EMPOWERED HOMES REQUIRE LOVE (V19)

Paul's command to husbands sounds less controversial but is still direct. They aren't to rule or control their wives but love them. Place their needs first. The Christian view of husband and wife has always been that God created men and women equally in His image and ordained different roles for each in the family. But these roles take a back seat to the primary consideration of equality and love.

In the same way that women of Colossae probably were reacting to their society and abusing their freedom, it was probably a new thing for Colossian men to treat wives as equals and coheirs in the kingdom. They had grown up in a culture that told them to think of women as inferior, more intelligent than an animal or child, but less than a man. Paul

tells these men: don't command your wives or control them; Love your wives. He follows by giving a reason. When a person is commanded or controlled, they usually respond with bitterness. The natural response to a tyrannical overlord is to be bitter. Paul says men aren't overlords. They are to love, which means more than having affectionate feelings or sexual attraction. It involves the husband's active and unceasing care for his wife's well-being. Again, this command extends beyond just husbands to the whole house. It's just that in this context, the husbands needed to hear it first.

EMPOWERED HOMES REQUIRE OBEDIENCE (V20)

A simple enough command. Children are instructed to obey. In Everything. Because this pleases the Lord. Repeating an old testament command Honor your father and mother. Perhaps they, too, had heard about freedom in Christ and thought that it freed them from the obligations to family. This is a common tendency, especially in older kids who think they are all grown up and therefore don't need to obey. Margaret Thatcher once said, "Being powerful is like being a lady; if you have to tell people you are, then you aren't." The same is true of being an adult. The only people saying, "I am an adult; stop treating me like a kid," are kids. Paul's answer: obey your parents.

Again this is something that extends beyond our family. It is training for our life as followers of Jesus. 1 John 4:20 says, "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." The same thing applies to obedience. How can we say we are willing to obey God when we are unwilling to obey those God has put into our lives for our good? This is a form of submission and is something that doesn't come naturally to any of us.

EMPOWERED HOMES REQUIRE NURTURE (V21)

The more robust command is laid on the parents. Again, like the husband shouldn't abuse the command to the wife to control her, parents shouldn't use this command of obedience to be hard on their children. Paul commands parents to parent children so as not to provoke, irritate, exasperate, embitter, or drive them to resentment. He doesn't say to give them whatever they want. He doesn't say not to discipline. Paul clearly expects parents to do things for and to the children that they might not like (hence the command to the children to obey) but to do it in such a way as not to embitter the children and, more importantly, so that they don't lose heart. The greek word heart here is *thumos*, which means "strong feeling and courage." A person without a *thumos* has become discouraged, passionless, and timid. We don't want children like that. We want obedience, respectful children...but children that still have their *thumos*, their passion, their life.

Too often, we parent our children so as to shape and mold them like they are furniture and we want them to fit into our lives and act in convenient ways. In reality, we are supposed to be planting them in fertile soil and shaping them like trees so that they can grow into the fullest expression of who God wants them to be. We have obligations as parents before God to help our kids be safe and become good people. But to crush their spirit or browbeat them into submission, or criticize or shame them until they do exactly what we want is to extinguish their thumos, and it is sin.

We are supposed to live out the Gospel to them as we parent. We didn't earn the love of God. No child should ever feel like parental love is conditional. How we love our children should reflect how God loves us all. NT Wright wrote: "hearing continually, both verbally and non-verbally, that they are of little value, they come to believe it and either sink down in obedient self-hatred or over-react in boastful but anxious self-assertion. The parents' duty, in effect, is to live out the Gospel to the child: that is, to assure them that they are loved, and accepted and valued for who they are, not for who they ought to be, should have been, or might (if only they would try a little harder) become."

In short, an empowered home is a home where people live out the Gospel towards each other by submitting to one another, loving one another, obeying one another, and nurturing one another.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do some of Paul's statements in this section not sit too well with us? Which ones bother you the most? Why?
2. What practical steps can we take to place our spouses before ourselves and help them become the person God wants them to be?
3. How do we exasperate our children or cause them to lose heart?
4. How are we sometimes guilty of trying to force our children into the mold we have for them? How can we help them become who God made them to be?
5. How can we train and discipline our children but at the same time not crush their spirit?

MAY 14 | KINGSLAND CORE VALUES

SPIRIT-LED COMMUNITY | ACTS 2:42

In addition to our mission and vision, here at Kingsland, we prioritize five core values: Grace-filled Truth, Empowered Homes, Spirit-led Community, Collective Legacy, and Selfless Influence. Over the next few weeks, we will look at each one more closely to understand the Biblical basis for each and discuss how we can learn to live it out.



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About Kingsland's Core Values
Spirit-led Community



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In a world where the church is frequently overrun by clever church growth tricks from people who look more like religious entrepreneurs or consumers than followers of Christ, it is helpful to consider the example of the early church and try to walk in their footsteps to see if we too can become people who are used by Jesus to turn the world upside down.

The story of the church's birth is told in Acts chapter 2. The first part of chapter 2:1-41 tells of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. It describes how they were all moved to begin speaking in languages, and everyone in the crowd heard it as their own (v7-8). It is important to note that this is not the first appearance of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament mentions the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10-14; Psalms 139:7; Judges 14:6, 19). Jesus gives the Holy Spirit directly to the disciples in John 20:22. What happens in Acts 2 is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as promised in Joel 2:28-32. What only a few people had experienced was now available to everyone. Peter delivers his Pentecost Message in Acts 2:14-36, and 3,000 people become followers of Jesus.

It is important to note what happens next. When we experience a powerful, transformative event, we often naively assume that our emotion and passion will last forever, whether it is the emotional high of a worship service, mission trip, or even in relationships with the giddy passions of being in love. But when the emotion dies, we start thinking that something is wrong or that maybe the event was not as important or magical as we thought. We need to realize that the emotions of passion and excitement are the spark that starts a fire, but you have to stack the wood right to ensure the fire will last.

Acts 2:42 is critical to that lasting fire. It says, “They devoted themselves...” Later in v2:47, it says, “and the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” We can see how the early church was built for success by looking at what things they devoted themselves to. If we want to experience the blessing and growth that God gave to the early church, perhaps a good starting part would be to consider the things they devoted themselves to; maybe then we will be equipped to live in Spirit-led community and be a healthy, vibrant, growing church.

THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO: APOSTLES TEACHING

A powerful religious experience did not remove from them the need to continue to learn about what they believed. So many times, we draw a line between worship and education. Sometimes, we even treat a Sunday morning worship service like a combination of a concert plus class. The thing is, neither part can be removed. We must never forget that we should grow in understanding our faith and how it applies to our life. We need to realize that learning about our faith has to be done in a worshipful way, not in a dry, detached, academic way. The Bible encourages us to grow deeper in our understanding of God by learning from those closer to Him than us. And that is precisely what the early church did. They sat at the Apostles’ feet and learned all they could about the Jesus they were starting to follow.

THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO: FELLOWSHIP

We live in an age of online education and rush-hour podcasts. We do a lot of learning on the go and by ourselves. That is fine, but man was not meant to be alone. We crave companionship. The ideal situation for learning and growing is in community. Some people try to feed themselves by themselves. However, the Christian life was never meant to be lived like that. The early church knew that, so they dedicated themselves to fellowship. I love that it says “dedicated” or “devoted.” That means they made an intentional choice to make it a priority. If we are not careful, we can fall into patterns of business and isolation. We, like those Pentecost Christians, need fellowship. The only way to make it happen is to make it happen by dedicating ourselves to it.

Also, the Greek word translated as fellowship is “koinonia,” which can also mean service. I think this points to the fact that the early church met for more than what we define as fellowship. They were looking for opportunities to serve and meet each other’s needs.

THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO: BREAKING BREAD

It might sound redundant that they dedicated themselves to “breaking bread,” and perhaps it is. It does clarify that these early Christians were not just sharing a quick chat over some donut holes before the lesson started. They were eating meals together. Meals are wonderful times to get to know people. It is where a lot of the communal life of a home happens. When mealtimes break down, families tend to start falling on hard times too. The same is true of church families. Sharing meals is a great way to share your life with someone. That is what these early believers were doing. They were sharing more than just surface information; they were sharing who they really were...they were sharing their life!

There is also a possibility that the phrase “breaking bread” also has a more profound connotation. At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and broke it. On the road to Emmaus, the disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. This passage may also be a reference to the fact that the early Christians were sharing the Lord’s Supper with each other. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11 that “as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you declare the Lord’s death until He comes.” It seems the early Christians were doing just that. They were following Jesus’s example. They were placing Jesus at the center of what they were doing and why they were meeting by remembering his sacrifice.

THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO: PRAYER

Finally, they dedicated themselves to prayer. Some people find prayer easier than others. There are a whole lot of reasons why we grow tired of prayer. We talk to God, but we can find it hard to hear him or do not know his voice. Maybe, we think that our prayers do not make a difference because God is wise, so he already knows what he is going to do. Perhaps, we worry God will not hear us or answer our prayers unless we are good enough. Or we might be mad that it feels like God turned down a past urgent or important prayer request. There are many reasons why we give up. Again, this is why it says the early church dedicated themselves to prayer. They made it central to what they did. They worked at it. They persevered and realized that the church was not a religious-themed club or charity. It was not just a place to get religious or moral instruction. It was a place to come together and meet a God they believed was real, personal, living, and revealed in Jesus Christ. They came together not just to meet each other but to meet God. They did not just talk about him; they talked to him.

And as they did all of this, as they drew near to God, God drew near to them and did amazing things in their midst. He performed signs and wonders. He changed their hearts. He added to their numbers. God is not calling us to devise clever new strategies to build our church. The church does not belong to us; it belongs to God. God will grow it. He calls us to draw near to him and watch what he does and join in.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What's the difference between a spirit-led community and community according to the world?
2. What do you think it means to dedicate yourself to the apostle's teaching? What are ways we can do it? What are the reasons we do not?
3. What do you think it means to dedicate yourself to fellowship? What are ways we can do it? What are reasons we do not?
4. What do you think it means to dedicate yourself to breaking bread? What are ways we can do it? What are reasons we do not?
5. What do you think it means to dedicate yourself to prayer? What are ways we can do it? What are reasons we do not?

MAY 21 | KINGSLAND CORE VALUES

COLLECTIVE LEGACY | EPHESIANS 4:1-16

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About Kingsland's Core Values
Collective Legacy



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One of the most common ways sin shows its ugly head in our society is our inability to “work and play well with others.” Many people believe the world would be a better place if everyone would just do what they say. We want other people to do what we say. And when they don’t, we fight, mope, manipulation, or just take our ball and go home.

The biblical picture of how we are supposed to work together involves us seeking a “collective legacy.” That means what we accomplish together is more important than what we each can accomplish individually.

The primary way to accomplish this goal is through the unity of the Church. The biblical model of unity is not everyone jockeying for position or making sure their voice is heard. The biblical model is to find the role God has made each of us to play and to play it well. In Ephesians 4, Paul compares the Church to a body. Perhaps referring to the Church as the Body of Christ is too commonplace for you. But maybe if we think deeply about this metaphor, we will find new insights to help us escape the selfishness and self-centeredness that comes so easily to us as sinful people. Without Biblical unity, pursuing collective legacy is impossible.

Paul starts chapter 4 by begging the Ephesians to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you’ve been called.” The Church has always been a collection of people who

are in the process of being sanctified. So we constantly need reminders to act like our new selves, not our old selves. Evidently, the Ephesians hadn't been focusing on unity in the Church, so Paul gives them a Crash course in what unity is and where it comes from.

THE SOUL OF UNITY (V1-3)

Paul appeals to the Ephesians to make unity with other believers their highest goal. He starts by describing the character traits we must manifest to realize this goal.

Humility – Paul calls them to humility. Humility doesn't mean thinking less of yourself. It means thinking of yourself less. The opposite of humility is arrogance, pride, selfishness, and self-centeredness. The Ephesians, like ourselves, were good at placing themselves at the center of the universe. Paul calls them here, as he does in other letters, to learn self-forgetfulness, to focus on others

Gentleness – Paul also calls the Ephesians to be gentle with one another. They had been rude, rough, and cruel to one another. Frequently, though, we think gentleness means weakness. That is not the case. You don't have to command someone weak to be gentle. The only people who have to be told to be gentle are those with the capacity to be rough. Gentleness means learning to treat people how they need, not how you want.

Patience – The Greek word for Patience is wonderful. Its makrothumia. It means "long temper." Patience is simply having a long fuse with people. We live in a multitasking, productivity-driven, efficiency-minded world. When things don't go as planned or as quickly as we planned, we get frustrated. Letting other people play their part means letting them do things at their own pace and in their way. We have to learn to let people be different than us.

Showing Tolerance for One Another in Love – Tolerance is one of those words that people aren't sure what it means anymore. It means allowing somebody else to do something you don't like. You don't like it...you tolerate it; allow it. Now as Christians, we aren't supposed to tolerate sin. But we are called to tolerate each other. This means accepting that other people are different and allowing them to be themselves without criticism or judgment. It means celebrating and embracing each other's uniqueness and allowing them to do things their way instead of ours.

Diligent to Preserve the Unity of the Spirit – What are you eager for? What are you focused on? In the workplace, we are frequently focused on productivity or quality. In the Church, many people have things they are diligent about. But the one thing Paul says everyone should prioritize is preserving our unity in Christ. Notice, we don't have to achieve unity. We

already have it because of who Christ is and what he has done. We are called to place as our top priority making sure nothing arises that could damage this unity.

THE SOURCE OF UNITY (V4-6)

Paul tells the Ephesians that the source of their unity is not to be found in their own identity as individuals or in their racial, political, social, or cultural identifiers. Instead, the unity they have comes from the fact that they serve the SAME lord; they long for the SAME hope, and they are filled with the SAME spirit. Sometimes we forget that. We look at others we disagree with within our Church or even others in our culture who identify as Christians, and we see everything we disagree about. Paul draws the Ephesians' attention back to the things that unite them. We will disagree with other believers. But we need to focus on them as brothers.

THE STRATEGY FOR UNITY (V7-13)

Paul goes on to describe how the unity of the body is realized in our midst.

God Gives Gifts v7 – The first step is for all of us to realize that when God calls us, he gives us all the same grace but different roles within his kingdom.

God Gives Leaders v11 – The second step is to realize that God has called some people to leadership roles within the Church. Notice that Paul lists several different kinds of leaders: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Sometimes we do ourselves or others a disservice when we fail to acknowledge that not all the people we call “pastors” have the same job. Apostle means “sent out ones” and may refer to missionaries. Prophets speak on behalf of God. Similar to what we call preachers today. An evangelist's primary job is to tell people about the good news. Pastors are those who shepherd and care for people. Teachers remind people of the truths handed down. Not everyone is called to be a missionary. Not everyone, not even every pastor, is an evangelist. Some pastors aren't great preachers but are tremendous in caring for people.

Leaders Help Develop Gifts (v12-13)– No matter what specific role a leader may fill, they all have a common job. And it is not to “do church” or “put on the show at church.” The role of the leaders in the Church is to:

- **To equip the saints** – that means every Christian
- **For the works of service** -- to identify their specific gift, to develop it, and use it to benefit others.

• **To the building up of the body of Christ** – to see the kingdom grow. Some grow the kingdom by adding to it through evangelism. Some grow the kingdom by strengthening it through teaching and care. However we do it, leaders help us use our gifts to see the kingdom grow

SEEING UNITY (V14-16)

Paul has told the Ephesians the attributes that makeup unity. He has reminded them of its true source. He has shown them God’s plan for preserving unity. He concludes by showing them what they must do to see unity manifest for themselves.

Starting Point – The first thing Paul tells them to do is grow up. Their selfishness and self-promotion make them sound like insecure children. They need to realize this and seek to mature as Christians. Many churches are content to let believers stay as children. We need to heed Paul’s call and press on to maturity.

Speech – He starts by saying how they address one another needs to change. Their speech needs two things: truth and love. When either is lacking, we treat people wrongly. Truth without love is too hard. Love without truth is too soft. We should never lie to people or hide things from people. But we should say things to people in ways that reflect concern for them and love.

Submission – The first thing about the Church is that none of us is the head. Colossians 1:17-18 says: “17 He [Jesus] is before all things, and in Him, all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the Church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.” No church belongs to any person or group of people. Christ is the head. We must realize that we must all submit to Christ and take on a supporting role.

Specialization – Paul describes the body as having multiple parts and being fitted together. We must realize we aren’t called to do everything or play every part. We must realize that we all have specialized tasks and should seek to find them.

Service – One of the most important things Paul says in this passage is that we are “held together by what every joint supplies.” It means, first, that God equips the Church with what it needs to hold itself together. And second, we are only held together when every part does its job. When any of us stops serving others, the body grows weaker. Each of us needs to find our place of service and devote ourselves to strengthening the body. Our goal is to find a place, not where we can be most visible or have the most praise or exalt

ourselves over others or have an easy time, but where we can use our gifts to serve others and strengthen the body.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does collective legacy mean? What is the relationship between unity and collective legacy?
2. Which attribute of unity is most challenging for you?
3. How do we identify our gifts?
4. What does it mean to speak the truth in love?
5. What does it mean that we are “held together by what every joint supplies?”

MAY 28 | KINGSLAND CORE VALUES

SELFLESS INFLUENCE | PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

In addition to our mission and vision, here at Kingsland, we prioritize five core values: Grace-filled Truth, Empowered Homes, Spirit-led Community, Collective Legacy, and Selfless Influence. Over the next few weeks, we will look at each one more closely to understand the Biblical basis for each and discuss how we can learn to live it out.



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About Kingsland's Core Values
Selfless Influence



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Influence. It's one of those words that can have both good and bad connotations. Bad connotations include control, manipulation, and competition. This form of influence means trying to influence others for our good and to our advantage. But we all know there is another kind as well. We have all had people in our lives who influenced us for good. They changed us because of their example, wisdom, and sacrifice. They didn't do it for themselves; they did it for us. That is selfless influence. The best example for us to follow is Jesus. The best place to look for how to do it is in Philippians, where Paul appeals to the Philippians to give up all their ambition and competition, to stop thinking of themselves first, and to start copying Christ.

THE STARTING POINT OF SELFLESS INFLUENCE (VV.1-4)

Paul begins with what sounds like a bit of flowery Bible talk that we often skip as we look for the more practical or meaty sections that contain practical application. But he is asking some critical questions: What motivates you? What drives you to do things? What are you seeking with your life? If it is the things of Christ, here is what living it out looks like.

Paul tells the Philippians to make his joy complete by choosing to listen to the promises of God rather than the empty threats of fear or the empty promises of sin. Paul lists three actions that characterize a life trusting God.

Selfless Influence requires: Real Unity (v.2)

Paul encourages the Philippians to seek true unity. The first proof of trusting God is the ability to lay down your agenda and trust that God is at work. He doesn't want superficial, pretend unity. The unity he describes is all-encompassing and penetrates the core of our being. Look at the four phrases used to describe unity: be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in Spirit, intent on one purpose. We are called to think the same, love the same, be in the same community, and have the same goal.

Selfless Influence requires: Real Humility (v.3)

Paul tells us to avoid two habits of thought: selfishness and empty conceit. True humility means considering other people as more important than ourselves. When we treat ourselves as more important than others, we are selfish. Think how often we all act selfishly in a thousand small ways because we believe we are more important than others.

Selfless Influence requires: Real Service (v.4) – Real unity is only possible if you see others as more important than yourself. Genuine humility will have the natural consequence of serving other people. If you really believe other people are more important than yourself, you will not be so consumed with getting what you want. Sometimes we are focused entirely on our own interests because we think we are the center of the universe. Sometimes we do it because we think everything is up to us, and if we don't look out for ourselves, no one will. Confidence in God enables us to stop being consumed only by what we think we need. It frees us to be conduits of blessing to others as well.

THE STANDARD OF SELFLESS INFLUENCE: JESUS (VV.5-11)

Paul concludes his exhortation with: "have this attitude in yourself which was also in Christ Jesus." If we follow Christ, we should seek to act like Him. Verses 6-11 are referred to as the "Kenotic Hymn." Its structure and content differ from how Paul wrote the rest of the letter. It seems to be an early Christian hymn. No one knows if Paul wrote it himself or is using it because he expects the Philippians to be familiar with it. The name Kenotic Hymn comes from the phrase in verse 7 "He emptied Himself." The Greek word that means "to empty" is "kenosis." In this hymn, Paul celebrates how Jesus emptied himself on our behalf to show us how to serve others.

He Laid Down His Rights (v.6) – "Although He existed in the form of God" means that Jesus was God. He had every right to demand that others, especially those created by Him, do what He said. "He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped" means He didn't think that what He was "entitled to" was the most important thing. "A thing to be grasped" means "a thing to be shaken in someone's face to get what you want or demand what you

think you are owed.” Jesus didn’t think His divinity should be used to exclude Him from service or gain Him special privilege. If Jesus didn’t think his divinity was something to be exploited to His advantage, what things do we need to stop trying to insist on or exploit to get our way?

He Emptied Himself (v.7) – The incarnation required that Jesus humble himself. The gap between God and man is so much that this humbling is described as an “emptying.” It can be hard for us to stop focusing on ourselves and think of other people as more important when we are convinced of our own self-importance. We should remember that Jesus did it first, and it was harder for Him. We are often deceived about our own self-importance. Jesus knew exactly who He was. He is the one by whom, for whom, and through whom all things were created. To go from that to being a man required Him to empty Himself. All we need is a healthy dose of realism and perspective.

He Obeyed (v.8) – Jesus didn’t just bridge the gap between God and Man; He became the lowest of men. Jesus had the right to be served. Instead, He came to serve. He obeyed God. He died on our behalf. Each aspect of this verse shows the depth of his willingness to obey. He didn’t just become a man; he became a servant. He didn’t just obey; He died. He didn’t just die; He died on a cross. There was nothing He wasn’t willing to do to demonstrate His complete surrender to the plan of God.

God Exalted Him (vv.9-11) – The result of Jesus emptying himself is that God exalted Him. Jesus didn’t exalt Himself. He was obedient. God exalted Him. That is what we are called to do as well. Not that we are supposed to be trying to become God. But instead, we are supposed to see Jesus as a model. What God did for Jesus in the big picture, He promises to do for us in our lives if we will trust and obey. James 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7 says, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

Our job is not to exalt ourselves or hold on to what we think we are owed. We are called to humble ourselves like Christ did, emptying ourselves, obeying in all things, trusting that God won’t waste our lives, trusting that God will exalt us at the proper time, and trusting that He does indeed care for us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do “encouragement in Christ,” “consolation of love,” and “fellowship of the Spirit” mean? How do we experience them? Where else do we sometimes go for encouragement, consolation, and fellowship?
2. Why do we think of ourselves as more important than others? How can we learn to reverse this?
3. What is humility? How do we get it? How do we demonstrate it?
4. What things do we sometimes “grasp” and try to use to get us special treatment? Why do we do it? How can we learn to let them go?
5. What does it mean to obey God and trust that He will exalt us at the proper time? What is required of us to do that?

— ABOUT THE AUTHOR —

Dr. Steve Jones has been the Teaching & Training Pastor at Kingsland Baptist Church since June 2016. He teaches regularly through the church in a variety of formats and works with the Discipleship Pastor to equip and develop leaders at Kingsland who are empowered to use their gifting to teach the Bible in life-changing ways.

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