

YOU'RE  
NOT  
FAR

## You're Not Far

We tend to think of the Bible— and particularly the life of Jesus— as a series of object lessons with tidy moral messages that mostly serve to make us more effective in our daily tasks. And while scripture can be read that way and produce helpful results, the truth is that rather than mere object lessons, scripture actually contains eyewitness narratives devoted to the larger message that connected all the individual parables and miracles in the minds of Jesus' first century audience— the Kingdom of God is not far. In fact, it's here, *now*, and it represents a complete reversal of the values of the world. And unlike the unjust, brutal values of human culture, the Kingdom of God extends an open invitation to everyone to get involved in the constructive work of making all things new and truly *good*.

### Start Talking

1. When you think of the concept of "good," what comes to mind? Where do you think your ideas and impressions of that concept came from?
2. Have you ever found your whole world— social situation, worldview, or relationship status— turned upside down overnight? What happened? How did you deal with it?

### Looking Back

1. What did you do to create a safer, more honest environment with your kids, young family members, or students this past week? Did you have any opportunities to honor their willingness to be vulnerable with you?
2. Were there any points where you had to choose between being right and being present in your relationships with the younger people around you?
3. Were you able to remain mindful of the call to radiate the goodness of God this week? How did it go?



### **What About You?**

1. If you had to summarize the brand(s) of Christianity you were exposed to growing up, what were the main ideas?
2. Did you ever notice the values of the specific brand(s) of Christianity you saw growing up differing from the values of Jesus or the New Testament? Where? How?
3. Did the version of Christianity you were exposed to early in life emphasize membership in an invisible kingdom?
4. Have you ever felt far from God? When? Why?
5. Do you think that feeling is an accurate representation of reality? Why or why not?

### **Look It Up**

*Read the Following Passages: Mark 1:1, 14-17, 19-22, 28. Mark 12:29-34. 1 Peter 1:3; 2:23-24.*

1. What is the connection between the teacher's response to Jesus in Mark 12, and Jesus's assurance that the teacher was, "not far from the kingdom of God?" What do you think Jesus meant?
2. Based upon what you read here, what are the values of the Kingdom of God? How are they different from the cultural values we see in the world?
3. What are the implications for reframing the good news as, "The Kingdom of God is at hand?" (As opposed to, 'Jesus died for your sins and so just passively hang out and don't do anything bad until you die.')
4. How does this affect our day to day lives?
4. If Jesus is our clearest picture of what God is truly like, what conclusions should we draw about the nature of God?
5. What do you think, "repent," means in this context? ("Repent, for the kingdom of God is near.")

### **Putting It All Together**

6. What would it look like to get involved in the active, constructive work of the Kingdom of God this week? What are three real ways you can do this?
7. What do you think membership in the radical, alternative Kingdom of God requires of you at work? At home? In society?
8. If Jesus showed us what real authority looks like, how can you implement his ethic in the various situations in your life where you are in charge?
9. Where do you find yourself most excited about the Kingdom of God and the ways it can change the world? (For some people, this may be the way the Kingdom of God can correct injustice. For others, it might be the Kingdom of God's ability to heal interpersonal relationships. Still, others might get excited about the way Kingdom values help people fight addiction or create healthy families.)

