

# A Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Ministry Resource

## Glimpses of the Kingdom in the Old Testament 5-Week Bible Discussion

From: Second Baptist Church, Liberty, Mo.



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# Glimpses of the Kingdom

2 Kings 6:8-23

## Conflict in the land

- Where do you see conflict in our country today?
- Is it important to know who is to blame?

## Revelation of God's presence

Chariots of fire were a mark of God's presence for this culture (see 2 Kings 2:11).

- What kind of symbol would you assign to God's presence for our time?
- How do you think this experience changed the servant's perspective:
  - Of political/military power?
  - Of the natural world?
  - Of his vocation?
- How would our culture's outlook of these things change if we believed God was hidden in plain sight?

Blindness/sight is an important element for all the characters.

- Which character do you relate to most?

## Peacemaking through hospitality

- What outcome does the king of Israel want from this situation?
- How does the reality of God's presence affect the path to peace?
- How should our belief in God affect our approach to threats?
  - Is our response to personal threats different than national threats?

Imagine a scenario where hospitality/generosity ends the conflicts you named at beginning of the session. Describe how this might work.

# Glimpses of the Kingdom

Daniel 3:16-30

## Which God to Serve

- In this story, service and worship are seen as the same thing. Are they?
- By this metric, who/what do most people in America worship?

## What's worth resisting and what's not

At times, Daniel and his friends resist being assimilated into Babylonian culture (i.e. – food in Chapter 1). At other times, they go with the flow (i.e. – their names).

- What is one negotiable aspect of your faith identity?
- What is one non-negotiable part of your personal faith?
- Consider the negotiable/non-negotiable dynamic for our church.

## Faith as Resistance

There is a struggle between Nebuchadnezzar and the (invisible) power of God. The King's reaction to Daniel and his friends is emblematic of his view of God (in that moment).

- In our culture, how important is it for the church to represent God well?
- What characteristic is most vital for people to see in the Church?

The three Israelites are prepared to die for their faith, even if God chooses not to save them. But in other OT stories, gods who don't respond are called idols.

- Would God's legitimacy be in doubt if God had not saved the three Israelites?
- When do we expect God to save us, no matter what?

## Looked like a god

Nebuchadnezzar sees a lot of things in the Book of Daniel, but he rarely understands them right away or without help.

- Why didn't this experience of God require explanation?
- Did the three Israelites see the fourth being too?
- How might the three Israelites tell this part of the story?

## God's presence changes things

- What is the most meaningful way God could "appear" in our culture?
- How would God's appearance change things?

# Glimpses of the Kingdom

Genesis 28:10-22 and 35:1-14

## Divine Places?

In the first scripture, the concept of place is very important. Perhaps this reflects the Hebrew struggle to find and retain a homeland.

- Does your extended family have a “place?”
- How important is your hometown to your identity?

## Here or Everywhere?

Jacob believes God is in this place, but God promises to accompany Jacob.

- Which idea is more appealing to you: God with you or a God you can find when needed?
- Have you ever visited a liminal or thin place, where God’s presence seems more tangible?

## Ascending and Descending

Jacob dreams a ladder or stairway between Earth and Heaven with angels ascending and descending.

- What does the movement of God between the two “locations” indicate/imply?

## Markers

Jacob sets up a pillar as a marker, and he also makes a vow. Both are ways to remember the importance of this moment and place.

- Do you have “markers” in your spiritual life?
- What promises/vows have you made that impact your spiritual life?

## Renaming

Places and people are both renamed in these passages. This is common in the Bible.

- How could a new name change a place?
- Why is a new identity sometimes important in one’s faith?
- Jacob (deceiver) changed to Israel (struggles with God). What new name would you give yourself to describe the progress of your faith?

# Glimpses of the Kingdom

Judges 6:11-27

## Facing Reality?

Israel is a growing nation but God's past actions seem to conflict with the current reality.

- What facts/circumstances tend to make people feel that God is on their side?
- For people you know, how does faith in God change when things aren't going well?

## Faith and Fear

Gideon's actions are an odd combination of bravery and fear.

- Can you recall a time when your faith was particularly courageous?
- For you, what does courageous faith look like?
- When is your faith more likely to be characterized by fear?
- What does scared faith look like?

## Presence and Absence

Gideon fully recognizes God's presence through the angel's disappearance.

- How might Gideon's being dense/unaware make him a better leader?
- In your life, are there times when God's "disappearance" has been a benefit?
- In our church, what "disappearance" might help us recognize God's presence?

## Countering Culture?

Gideon's first actions are against the false gods, not the conquering people.

- How important is our faithfulness in receiving God's blessings/presence?
- When is it important for Christians to be "counter-cultural"?
- Do you think God is disappointed by Gideon's continued fearfulness?
- Is God disappointed by OUR fearfulness? By our cultural assimilation?

## War and Peace

Gideon, a warrior, chooses the word "peace" to describe his experience

- What word best describes what God's presence means in your life?
- What kind of "altar" have you built in your life, as a marker of this?

## Voice of the People

Eventually, Gideon is renamed by the people, not by God.

- What name might your friends, family and coworkers give you because of your faith?

# Glimpses of the Kingdom

Exodus 3:1-12

## Miracles

The Burning Bush is among the most famous miracles/God moments in monotheism.

- What's the most amazing God moment/miracle you've heard of or experienced?
- How did this moment change those who experienced it?

## Why Moses?

The story of Moses is among the most important in the Scriptures, for Jews and Christians alike.

- What made Moses the right choice to lead the Israelites out of slavery?
- What made Moses the wrong choice?
- How is Moses' story affected by his serving as a shepherd for his father-in-law?

Moses is intrigued and he "turns aside," which seems to be significant.

- How important is curiosity to your faith? Should Christians cultivate curiosity more?
- Do you think Moses understood the importance of this moment?
- Why is the ground holy?

## Noticing vs. Seeing

There is tension in Moses' experience: We are encouraged to notice what God is doing, but we are discouraged from "seeing" God.

- What is the difference between seeing God and noticing God's activity/presence?
- What is most intriguing to you about what God is currently doing?
- Moses is scared. Are we supposed to be scared too?

God also "sees" a lot in this passage.

- Are you satisfied with God's level of seeing in this story?
- What do you wish God "saw" more clearly/urgently in today's world?

## Heaven and Earth

Reflect on this verse by Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

"Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God,  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;  
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."

- Where do you most often notice earth "crammed with heaven?"
- What are some common experiences that could be "afire with God" for you this week?