

**BUILDING KINGDOM COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH KINGDOM AUTHORITY AND KINGDOM PRAYER**

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## Introduction

Watchmen Nee wrote a book called *Spiritual Authority* in which he states, “God alone is authority in all things; all the authorities of the earth are instituted by God. Authority is a tremendous thing in the universe—nothing overshadows it. It is therefore imperative for us who desire to serve God to know the authority of God.”<sup>1</sup> Knowing G-d’s<sup>2</sup> authority is more than just submitting to it. Followers of Jesus also have a responsibility to reflect that authority in their daily lives by imitating His earthly lifestyle and utilizing His authority through Holy Spirit to proactively bring His Kingdom agenda into their spheres of influence. In this paper the writer will provide a brief overview of Kingdom theology, present a word study on the Hebrew and Greek definitions of “authority,” develop a Biblical foundation for Kingdom prayer and Kingdom authority, discuss how utilizing Kingdom-focused initiatives can transform culture into Kingdom communities, and end with a personal application and conclusion.

### A Brief Overview of Kingdom Theology

The Bible, though composed of sixty-six different books, is one complete story of restoration and redemption rooted in a covenant relationship between G-d and humanity.<sup>3</sup> In the book, *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants*, Gentry and Wellum list six primary covenants found in the Bible: 1) The Covenant with Creation (Genesis 1–3); 2) The Covenant with Noah (Genesis 6–9); 3) The Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12,15,17, and 22); 4) The Covenant at Sinai (Exodus 19–24); 5) The Covenant with David (2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89), and 6) The New

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<sup>1</sup> Watchmen Nee, *Spiritual Authority* (New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers Inc., 1972), Adobe Digital Edition PDF, Chapter 1-God’s Throne Established on Authority, 5.

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, I joined a Messianic Jewish-Gentile congregation. About six months after that I adopted the Jewish tradition of spelling G-d with an underline or dash as a deep sign of respect His name (Yehuda Shurpin, “Why Write ‘G-d’ Instead of ‘G-o-d’?” Accessed August 24, 2022, [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/486809/jewish/Why-Write-Gd-Instead-of-G-o-d.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/486809/jewish/Why-Write-Gd-Instead-of-G-o-d.htm) ).

<sup>3</sup> Preben Vang and Terry G. Carter, *Telling God’s Story: The Biblical Narrative from Beginning to End* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), Accessed September, 5, 2022, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=1315407>, The Bible Story: An Overview, 15-23.

Covenant (prophesied in Jeremiah 31–34, Isaiah 54, and Ezekiel 33–39).<sup>4</sup> J. Rodman Williams also reviews those six covenants in his book, *Renewal Theology*,<sup>5</sup> describing the New Covenant as a covenant of Jesus' blood demonstrated by His own words in Luke 22:20 which says, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."<sup>6</sup> Paul also reflects that idea when he refers to the same statement from Jesus in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:25). Williams then expresses five promises delivered through the New Covenant which are: 1) the law written on their hearts; 2) a unique relationship between God and His people; 3) the knowledge of the Lord; 4) the forgiveness of sins; and 5) an eternal inheritance.<sup>7</sup> Anyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Messiah has access to all those promises and the Kingdom of God.

Theologians and scholars have been debating the meaning of the term "Kingdom of God" for centuries. Gentry and Wellum refer to that concept as "*God's kingly and sovereign rule*, and it is especially tied to God's *saving reign* that has broken into this world in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus."<sup>8</sup> Avery Cardinal Dullus, S.J., Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University, points to the Kingdom of God as being a biblical metaphor in the Old Testament derived from Jewish apocalyptic literature and rabbinic teaching which is connected to the arrival of the Messiah and restoration of Israel as a political power. In the New Testament, Dullus believes the term takes on new significance based on Jesus being that long-awaited Messiah "in whom the kingdom of God is dynamically present. . . . [He] sends forth his Spirit upon the community of the disciples, which becomes a zone where he reigns in a special way."<sup>9</sup> *The*

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<sup>4</sup> Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2015), Adobe Digital Edition PDF, Chapter 2- Major Covenants In The Bible, 53.

<sup>5</sup> J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective 3 Vol. in One* (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan Publishing House 2011), Adobe Digital Editions PDF, Chapter 12-The New Covenant, 498.

<sup>6</sup> All Bible references are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, *Renewal Theology*, Chapter 12-Promises, 499-501.

<sup>8</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants*, Chapter 11- Kingdom Through Covenant, 266.

<sup>9</sup> Scott Hahn, and Dave Scott, eds, *Letter & Spirit, Volume 3: The Hermeneutic of Continuity: Christ, Kingdom, and Creation*, (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2007), Adobe Digital Edition PDF, The Church and the Kingdom: A Study of Their Relationship in Scripture, Tradition, and Evangelism, 34-35.

*Kingdom of God – Theology in Community* provides five Kingdom perspectives. Editors Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson remark that each one contains a piece of the truth, but none contains the full truth. Those Kingdom perspectives are as follows: 1) Classic Liberalism - the Kingdom is the rule of G-d in the hearts of His people; 2) Social Gospel - the Kingdom is established through pursuing ethical righteousness; 3) Liberation Theology - the Kingdom is liberating exploitation and poverty to create a world of fellowship; 4) Christian Reconstructionism - the Kingdom utilizes the church to align government with Christian laws and principles; and 5) Postmodern Evangelicalism - the Kingdom is the ecclesia living out the way and message of Jesus to bring heaven to earth.<sup>10</sup> Charles Colson, the author of *Loving God*, views the Kingdom of God as “a kingdom of paradox, where through the ugly defeat of a cross, a holy God is utterly glorified. Victory comes through defeat; healing through brokenness; finding self through losing self.”<sup>11</sup>

Part of the reason for the variety of Kingdom theological viewpoints is because even though many times throughout the Gospels Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God had arrived, there are also seemingly contradictory statements in scripture from Jesus which cause confusion about whether His Kingdom is presently here or whether it has yet to arrive. For example, in Matthew 12:28 Jesus says, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you,” which speaks of a present Kingdom. But in Matthew 26:29, Jesus says, “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom,” which implies a future Kingdom. After centuries of debate, most biblical scholars agree that Jesus’ Kingdom is both here *and* has not wholly arrived.<sup>12</sup> This leaves humanity in an “already-not yet” tension as they wait for its full completion when Jesus returns to earth.

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher W. Morgan, and Robert A. Peterson, eds., *The Kingdom of God – Theology in Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), Adobe Digital Edition PDF, Introduction-Widely Divergent Views of the Kingdom, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Colson, *Loving God* (Kentwood, MI: Zondervan, 1987), Adobe Digital Edition PDF, Chapter 1, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Russell D. Moore and Robert E. Sagers, "The Kingdom of God and the Church: A Baptist Reassessment," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12 (2008): 68-87, Accessed September, 25, 2022, [www.jcmatthews.org/uploads/5/3/7/7/5377341/reflections\\_of\\_the\\_kingdom\\_carl\\_henry.pdf](http://www.jcmatthews.org/uploads/5/3/7/7/5377341/reflections_of_the_kingdom_carl_henry.pdf), 40.

Derek Morpew, author of *The Mission of the Kingdom: The Theology of Luke-Acts*, describes Jesus' Kingdom as a world that has two dimensions – one in the present age where humanity experiences life on earth as it is, and one where they experience His Spirit on earth as the coming age and eternal life lived now.<sup>13</sup> Frederick Carr, in his paper titled “Beginning at the End: The Kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians,” proposes that Paul presents the Kingdom of God to the Corinthian church through a community perspective as “a future incorporation into God’s rule, which they can obtain through participation in Christ’s present reign, and which manifests as the power that both grounds and governs their corporate existence.”<sup>14</sup>

Additional viewpoints about the Kingdom of God are numerous. Yet Luke 17:20-21 shows Jesus telling the Pharisees that ““The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”” Instead of clearly defining what His Kingdom looks like and when it will be arriving, Jesus purposely kept it cloaked in a sense of mystery and revealed glimpses of what it would be like through parables and stories. Then, just before He went back to heaven, Jesus told His disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Mat 28:18-20).” Weeks later the disciples gained more understanding of Jesus’ statement when the Holy Spirit infilled each of them during the festival of *Shavu’ot* (Pentecost). That encounter initiated a spiritual partnership between Jesus and all His followers from that point forward which provided His authority and power for Kingdom impact within their sphere of

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<sup>13</sup> Derek Morpew, *The Mission of the Kingdom: The Theology of Luke-Acts: Kingdom Theology Series* (Cape Town, South Africa: Vineyard International Publishing, 2011), Adobe Digital Edition PDF, Preface, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Frederick David Carr, “Beginning at the End: The Kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (July 2019): 449–69. doi:10.1353/cbq.2019.0140.

influence for His glory as they wait for Him to return and bring the fulfillment of His Kingdom with Him (Revelation 19 – 21).

### “Authority” – A Greek and Hebrew Word Study

After Jesus finished His Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:28-29 states, “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.” The English word “authority” in that verse was translated from the Greek word *exousia* (ἐξουσία).<sup>15</sup> *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* defines *exousia* as authority, right or power, and is “sometimes used with references to various types of divinely ordained human authority enforced by civil law – such as authority to govern, to own property, or to regulate the peace.”<sup>16</sup> *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* describes *exousia* as “physical and mental power; the ability or strength with which one is endued, which he either possesses or exercises.”<sup>17</sup> The Hebrew equivalent to *exousia* is *tōqeḇ* (תִּקְוֶה) which is defined by *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* as strength or power<sup>18</sup> and it also references the root word *tāqaḇ* which means to overpower.<sup>19</sup> *Tōqeḇ* is defined as to prevail over, overpower, might, power, or authority in another Hebrew dictionary titled *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary Of The Hebrew Language For Readers Of English*.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “Exousia - Strong’s G1849,” BlueLetterBible.org, Accessed August 31, 2022, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1849/kjv/tr/0-1/>.

<sup>16</sup> William D Mounce, “Authority,” *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), Adobe Digital Edition PDF, 47-48.

<sup>17</sup> “Exousia - *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*,” BlueLetterBible.org, Accessed August 31, 2022, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1849/kjv/tr/0-1/>.

<sup>18</sup> “tōqeḇ - Strong’s H8633 - *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*,” BlueLetterBible.org, Accessed August 31, 2022, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h8633/kjv/wlc/0-1/>.

<sup>19</sup> “tāqaḇ - Strong’s H8630 - *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*,” BlueLetterBible.org, Accessed August 31, 2022, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h8630/kjv/wlc/0-1/>.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary Of The Hebrew Language For Readers Of English* (Jerusalem, Israel: CARTA Jerusalem, 1987), Adobe Acrobat Digital Edition PDF, 715.

Digging deeper using The Law of First Mention,<sup>21</sup> the first time *exousia* is used in the New Testament is in Matthew 7:29, and the first time *tōqep̄* is used in the Old Testament is in Esther 9:29.<sup>22</sup> Within the Esther passage, it is clear that the great power and authority (*tōqep̄*) Mordecai and Esther utilized was only possible because the King of Persia gave his power to them. In Jesus' case, however, His words and actions held authority (*exousia*) and power from a source within Himself rather than being granted by anyone else. The *Expositor's Greek Testament* Commentary on Matthew 7:29 describes it this way, "Jesus spake with authority, out of His own soul, with direct intuition of truth; and, therefore, to the answering soul of His hearers. The people could not quite explain the difference, but that was what they obscurely felt."<sup>23</sup> *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* explains Matthew 7:29 through comparing the source of authority held by Jewish leadership with Jesus' source of authority, showing that Jesus taught and preached by delivering truths "in his own name, and by his own authority...he spoke as a lawgiver, as one that had authority from heaven, and not from men; and not as the Scribes, who used to say, when they delivered anything to the people, 'our Rabbis", or "our wise men say' so and so."<sup>24</sup> Therefore, because Jesus held authority within himself as part of the Godhead, upon His death and resurrection He had the legal right to delegate his authority to the Disciples - along with everyone else who accepted Him as Lord and Messiah – so they could continue implementing His Kingdom ministry on earth until He returns.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The "Law of First Mention" is a Hermeneutics tool of locating the passage of scripture where a word is used for the first time to get the fundamental inherent meaning of it ["The Law Of First Mention," BiblicalResearch.info, Accessed August 31, 2022, <https://www.biblicalresearch.info/page56.html>].

<sup>22</sup> "Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew gave full written authority, confirming this second letter about Purim" (Esther 9:29).

<sup>23</sup> "Matthew 7:29 - *Expositor's Greek Testament* Commentary," BibleHub.com, Accessed August 31, 2022, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/7-29.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> "Matthew 7:29 - *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*," BibleHub.com, Accessed August 31, 2022, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/7-29.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Williams, *Renewal Theology*, V2-Chapter 2-The Commencement of Jesus' Ministry, 1019.



## **A Biblical Foundation of Kingdom Authority and Kingdom Prayer**

In Randy Clark's book, *Authority From God – How and Why You Can Kick the Devil Out Of Your Life*, he explains that the authority Adam received in the garden was forever, regardless of how he used it. So when Adam and Eve ate from the tree of good and evil, they essentially became Satan's slaves and transferred their authority over to him.<sup>26</sup> To reestablish humanity's authority within the earth, G-d created a restoration plan through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. But restoring their authority wasn't enough. Jesus had to also teach humanity how to wield it the right way so that they could recapture the kingdom lifestyle G-d originally granted them in the garden. For that reason, Jesus' entire ministry centered on showing his disciples how to access and use their authority to bring the Kingdom of G-d back into the earth.<sup>27</sup>

### Kingdom Authority - A Biblical Foundation

In Judaism, the rabbi-student relationship is one in which the student would imitate the rabbi's words and deeds to such an extent that when the teacher dies "it is as though he is not dead. For he leaves behind him one like himself."<sup>28</sup> Rabbinical students accept this lifestyle when they choose a rabbi to study under throughout their formal training, expecting to grow in knowledge, skill, and authority as they emulate their teacher and mature over time into the role of teacher and rabbi with students of their own. Therefore, when Jesus initially asked each of the disciples to follow Him, they were familiar with that concept. However, their presumptions were based on traditional rabbinic training between a human student and a human rabbi. Since Jesus was fully human and fully G-d, they had no framework to understand the rabbi-student "imitation" lifestyle that Jesus was inviting them into. They also could not have conceived the life-altering encounters

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<sup>26</sup> Randy Clark, *Authority From God – How and Why You Can Kick the Devil Out Of Your Life* (Maitlan, FL: Xulon Press, 2006), Adobe Digital Editions PDF, Chapter 1.

<sup>27</sup> Referenced from a previous GATS paper [Kris Castro, "Spiritual Formation & Discipleship Final Paper" (Global Awakening Theological Seminary, October 10, 2021), 14].

<sup>28</sup> Jon Mark Ruthven, *What's Wrong With Protestant Theology* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2013), 276.

they would experience as Jesus revealed His divine authority to them, and groomed them to use it so they could continue His ministry after He was gone.

When Jesus initiated their student-rabbi relationship, He began teaching His disciples in public places where He demonstrated His authority and power by healing people of all kinds of sicknesses along with casting out demons (Mat 4:23-24 and Mark 1:32-34). Privately, they witnessed Jesus command a storm to calm (Mat 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8:22-25) which provided an even deeper awareness of the magnitude of His authority over everything on earth. Later, they were amazed to discover He even had authority to raise people from the dead (a young girl restored to life in Matthew 9:18-26 and Lazarus after four days in a tomb in John 11:28-44). In the book, *A Theology of Word and Spirit*, author Donald G. Bloesch refers to authority by using the Latin word *auctoritas* which carries a “moral weightiness” that gives a person the right to exercise power in a sphere of influence. Bloesch then explains that “authority in the biblical sense means the power and right to determine what is true or valid. Authority carries the connotation of both binding force and liberating power. It not only directs and controls us but also sets us free for creative service.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus made it clear that He is the embodiment of truth in John 14:6, and during His time on earth the disciples repeatedly watched Him use His power to bind or liberate as He saw fit. They also were amazed at the creative strategies He implemented throughout the Kingdom ministry within His sphere of influence which included parables, hyperbole statements to intentionally shock people (Mat 5:29-30, Mat 7:3-5), action-oriented requests to test a person’s level of commitment (the Rich Young Ruler in Luke 18:18-23), and even turning around a commonly implemented penalty so that the accusers would have to look at their own hearts as they decided the fate of another person (the men who wanted to stone the adulterous woman from John 8:6-8). Through all

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<sup>29</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *A Theology of Word & Spirit - Authority & Method in Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), Adobe Digital Editions PDF, Chapter 7-Rethinking Theological Authority, 187.

of Jesus' words and actions, He was providing the disciples with both Kingdom education and training on how to minister effectively.

Jesus, the perfect teacher and rabbi, also offered opportunities for the disciples to practice everything He had taught them. He sent them out two by two (Mat 10:1 and Mark 6:7), transferring His authority to them and instructing them to preach, to heal, to raise the dead, and to cast out demons. Later, as other individuals also committed to follow Jesus, He selected an additional seventy-two people and similarly commissioned them with His authority to heal the sick and share the Kingdom of God with everyone they met (Luke 10:1-12). Along with those instructions, Jesus told them not to bring any money or take extra clothes or supplies with them. Instead, they were to look for someone worthy to stay with – extending their peace or taking it back depending on the response of those in the community they visited (Mat 10:9-14, Mark 6:8-11, and Luke 10:4-11). Jesus also warned His followers that they would experience persecution (Mat 10:16-23), but not to have any fear when it happened (Mat 10:26-33). Unlike regular rabbinic students who were being trained in traditional Jewish theology and ministry styles that were widely accepted by their community, the disciples were being trained in Kingdom theology and ministry initiatives which were outside the scope of their Jewish community's comprehension. Because of that, Jesus made sure they knew that the cost of following Him required a commitment to love Him more than anyone else and a willingness to lose their lives if necessary for His Kingdom work (Mat 10:37-39).

In the *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*, Stanley Hauerwas infers that Jesus' intention within the unique preparation instructions He gave to His followers before they left for their ministry assignments was to ensure they would "have nothing to commend other than Jesus himself...[and] nothing at their disposal other than the authority that they have been given by Jesus. As a result, nothing is allowed to get in the way of the witness they make to the gospel."<sup>30</sup> Grant

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<sup>30</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), Accessed September 5, 2022, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=3117170#>, 190.

Osborne's commentary titled *Matthew* echoes that point. Osborne believes the purpose behind Jesus' instructions was "to remove all material encumbrances and incentives so as to focus entirely on God's work...[to] not use ministry for profit, and depend on God rather than self."<sup>31</sup> The experience of departing for a ministry trip with nothing except what they were wearing forced everyone to trust Jesus more deeply while at the same time acknowledging G-d's sovereignty and oversight of their needs during their journey.<sup>32</sup>

When the disciples returned from their ministry experience, they had no idea Jesus was preparing them for His impending death, resurrection, and ascension. Realizing He only had a limited period of time left on earth, Jesus leveraged every opportunity to teach them how to use His authority and help them understand the message of His Kingdom, knowing His Spirit would arrive to empower them with everything they would need to advance the Good News of the Gospel throughout the known world. Until then, in His sermons and conversations, He depicted His Kingdom using descriptions such as "Kingdom of Heaven" or "Kingdom of God." Those phrases are documented many times within the English Standard Version (ESV) Bible. For instance, there are thirty-one references to "Kingdom of Heaven" in the Gospel of Matthew. "Kingdom of God" produces fourteen references in Mark, thirty-two in Luke, two in John, and five mentions in Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount is also full of Kingdom descriptions, and Dallas Willard describes that sermon as "a concise statement of Jesus' teachings on how to actually live in the reality of God's present kingdom available to us from the very space surrounding our bodies."<sup>33</sup> Willard also believes Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:5-15 and Luke 11:1-4 (commonly known as "The Lord's Prayer") is vital for kingdom living and supports Jesus' followers to view the world

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<sup>31</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*. Vol. Epub ed. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2010), Accessed September 5, 2002, <https://search-ebscohost-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1524854&site=ehost-live&scope=site>, Chapter 41-10:10...or sandals or staff.

<sup>32</sup> Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief - Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), Adobe Digital Editions PDF, 179.

<sup>33</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2018), Adobe Digital Editions PDF, 97.

with G-d's eyes.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Willard claims that regular prayer becomes Kingdom prayer when people are honest with G-d so that Jesus can teach them "how to be in prayer what we are in life and how to be in life what we are in prayer."<sup>35</sup>

### Kingdom Prayer - A Biblical Foundation

In a book titled, *Lord Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer & The Christian Life*, authors Willimon and Hauerwas state that when people pray the Lord's Prayer, they are "moving out from their old ways and means, ordinary people who have been given extraordinary authority to be part of the divine assault upon the realm of evil as those who 'cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them' (Mark 6:13)."<sup>36</sup> In Kate Dugdale's journal article, "Understanding the Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm for Prayer," she cautions people against allowing the Lord's Prayer to become "a liturgical mumble,"<sup>37</sup> but rather to see it as a presentation for how things should be instead of as they are in one's current circumstances. According to Dugdale, the first half of the Lord's Prayer focuses on G-d's reign being fully established on earth and the second half focuses on a) the realities of human life, b) their holistic physical and spiritual being, and c) how to live in relationship with G-d and one another.<sup>38</sup> Dugal further explains that the flow of the prayer - which begins with G-d's name, His kingdom, and His will being addressed all before requesting any personal needs be met - clarifies the correct perspective of how individual needs fit within the bigger agenda of G-d's kingdom plans.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 269.

<sup>35</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 214.

<sup>36</sup> William H. Willimon and Stanley Hauerwas, *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer & The Christian Life* (Nashville, Tn: Abingdon Press, 1996), Adobe Digital Editions PDF, Introduction.

<sup>37</sup> Kate Dugdale, "Understanding the Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm for Prayer," *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought & Practice* 19, no. 3 (September 2012): 31, Accessed September 1, 2022, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=afh&AN=84012519&site=ehost-live> .

<sup>38</sup> Dugdale, "Understanding the Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm for Prayer," 32.

<sup>39</sup> Dugdale, "Understanding the Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm for Prayer," 36.

Willimon and Hauerwas also examine each part of the Lord's Prayer, pointing out key themes essential for a Kingdom lifestyle that support Jesus' followers to become the people they were meant to be in Him as they regularly use His prayer.<sup>40</sup> Beginning with the opening section of the prayer ["Our Father" (Mat 6:9)], Willimon and Hauerwas assert that Jesus wanted His disciples to first acknowledge His relationship with G-d as the Father's Son before recognizing their relationship as G-d's creation and children. As their true Father (above their biological fathers), their identity securely remains in Him.<sup>41</sup> The next phrase ["in Heaven" (Mat 6:9)] confirms G-d's position as ruler of the whole cosmos which gives His children the ability to boldly "pray for such absurdly extravagant gifts as bread for the world, peace among the nations, healed marriages, cured cancer, rain...because we pray to the Father in heaven, the one who rules."<sup>42</sup> Through declaring, "Hallowed be your name" (Mat 6:9), humanity offers praise to a Holy G-d who graciously gave them His name, and through Jesus' death and resurrection, they were sanctified and set apart as holy to represent Him on earth.<sup>43</sup> Upon proclaiming, "Your kingdom come" (Mat 6:10), Jesus is inviting His followers to change citizenship from their earthly kingdom into His spiritual Kingdom governed by His rule rather than following the world's agenda.<sup>44</sup> By maintaining, "Your will be done, on earth as in heaven" (Mat 6:10), Jesus is training His followers to recognize G-d's will for any situation as a petition of hope and patience because "Without patience we are tempted to storm the walls of injustice, destroying our enemy and thus betraying God's way of forgiveness. Instead we are called to be a patient people schooled as we are by the patience of our crucified God so that the world may know that love, not violence, rules this world."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Willimon and Hauerwas, *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer & The Christian Life*, Introduction-Pray in This Way, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, Chapter 1: "Our Father," 13-15.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, Chapter 2: "In Heaven," 17.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, Chapter 3: "Hallowed Be Your Name," 23.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, Chapter 4: "Your Kingdom Come," 32.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, Chapter 5: "Your Will Be Done, On Earth As In Heaven," 38.

The first time Jesus brings humanity's needs to the forefront in that prayer is when He tells them to say, "Give us today our daily bread" (Mat 6:11). Through this request, Jesus reminds His followers that G-d's provision every day is sufficient, and they can rely on Him to meet their daily needs. Jesus' use of the word "our" also reminds humanity of their communal commitment to care for each other without being concerned with what is "mine" because of the Gospel message and Kingdom emphasis established through their all-powerful and generous G-d.<sup>46</sup> Jesus shifts gears at this point in the teaching of His prayer to remind His followers of the necessity of forgiveness: "And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mat 6:12). His followers must first humbly ask G-d for forgiveness for the things they have done before offering forgiveness to others for the wrongs they have suffered. This process supports a Kingdom mindset that humanity's lives are not their own which encourages them to avoid seeking retribution and vengeance.<sup>47</sup>

Jesus knew His followers would experience significant challenges, trauma, and injustice during their lifetime until He returned to earth, so He addresses that in the next section of His prayer by saying, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Mat 6:13). Willimon and Hauerwas discuss this segment of the prayer as follows:

Praying this prayer is the beginning of problems we would never have had had we not met Christ and enlisted with Christ's people. The forces of evil do not relinquish their territory without a fight and, in being saved, God's newly won territory is you. You become a virtual battleground where the living God fights the powers. So praying this prayer is a bit like war.<sup>48</sup>

Jesus knew spiritual warfare was inevitable as His followers accepted His invitation into His Kingdom work, and in that section of the prayer He is assuring them that G-d will help them resist the evil powers who will do everything they can to tempt them to step off G-d's path into situations where they can influence their own wicked agendas. Finally, Jesus wraps up the prayer with a

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, Chapter 6: "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," 43-45.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, Chapter 7: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us," 46 and 50.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, Chapter 8: "Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil," 53.

second reminder about the importance of forgiveness<sup>49</sup> (Mat 6:14-15) and then moves on to other topics and instructions of Kingdom living before ending His Sermon on the Mount. Larry Hart, the author of *Truth Aflame*, contends that Jesus taught His disciples how to pray in that way so that their prayers would be answered stating, “The Lord’s Prayer is a church prayer, centered on God and the kingdom . . . [and] Authentic Christianity is supernatural Christianity. Answered prayer should be the norm.”<sup>50</sup> With that in mind, followers of Jesus can confidently partner with Him for significant Kingdom impact within their spheres of influence to transform their communities for His glory.

### **Utilizing Kingdom-Focused Initiatives To Transform Culture Into Kingdom Communities**

One of the most famous and lengthy literary works contrasting worldly cultures and kingdom cultures is *City of God* by St. Augustine. It is a 22-book series Augustine began writing in either late AD 412 or early AD 413 and completed in AD 427.<sup>51</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine’s City of God* is an academic review of the 22-book series which contains articles written by fourteen renowned scholars of Augustine’s works. In the Introduction, editor Fr. David Vincent Meconi shares that in *City of God* Augustine used two city metaphors to describe humanity’s lifestyle choices: 1) City of God [a heavenly and godly city where people love G-d with immense humility] and 2) the earthly city [a godless city where the love of self, pride, ambition, and contempt of G-d rule the environment]. Citizenship for each city is not determined by location but by where a person’s love is focused: G-d or self.<sup>52</sup> Father Meconi states that for Augustine,

Destiny is not a matter of ancestry or genetics but of one's free will. The ultimate meaning of human history is found not in the affairs of state but in every human person who submits to Christ so as to live with him and his citizenry forever in the City of God . . . . [Augustine] canvasses the former and false ways humans tried to

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<sup>49</sup> “If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15).

<sup>50</sup> Larry D. Hart, *Truth Aflame: Theology for the Church in Renewal*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), Adobe Digital Editions PDF, Chapter 4-Prayer, 163-164.

<sup>51</sup> Fr. David Vincent Meconi, S.J., *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine’s City of God* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2021), Adobe Digital Editions PDF, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Meconi, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine’s City of God*, 3-4.



draw close to the divine and offers a counter proposal: in surrendering to the God revealed in the Old and New Testaments, and alive today most subsistently in his Church on earth, human persons can know the integrity and the joy intended for every created soul since the beginning of time.<sup>53</sup>

Based on that premise, the trajectory for how one's life experiences build upon each other does stem from a person's free will which ultimately becomes the foundation of their overall destiny.

In *City of God*, Augustine portrays the earthly city as a place of suffering, vices, carnal lust, and overall disorder and disobedience which he directly relates to humanity's overt disobedience to G-d.<sup>54</sup> Though people long for lasting peace, Augustine knows it can only be found through Christ and demonstrates that belief throughout his book series. Similar to Augustine's description of the earthly city, modern-day America continues to deconstruct its Judeo-Christian heritage and shift its core values into an eerie likeness of the pagan culture of ancient Greece. Across the U.S.A, people have been progressively adopting morality guidelines based on their feelings rather than a unified standard of truth. Evidence of this includes a rapid decline of gender orientation standards creating an "alphabet soup"<sup>55</sup> approach, increased promiscuity across multiple generations of heterosexuals, and ever-decreasing sexual boundaries within homosexual and LGBTQ relationships.

In other areas of society, American culture continues to lean more and more towards radical liberal ideologies which are proactively polarizing community and family relationships - vertically and horizontally - across all political and economic lines. For instance: 1) Educational institutions across the country seem to no longer focus on helping students develop critical thinking skills and instead are indoctrinating them into a variety of agenda-based liberal ideologies; 2) The U.S. government continues to create policies and legislation that are intentionally removing G-d and Christianity everywhere it still has influence; 3) The Media has become a propaganda machine rather than investigating and sharing news items from a foundation of truth; 4) Arts &

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<sup>53</sup> Meconi, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine's City of God*, 6-7.

<sup>54</sup> Meconi, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine's City of God*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Sara B. Oswalt, Samantha Evans and Andrea Drott, "Beyond alphabet soup: helping college health professionals understand sexual fluidity," *Journal of American College Health*, 64:6, (2016): 502-508, DOI: 10.1080/07448481.2016.1170688.

Entertainment is shaping society to fully embrace a lifestyle of pleasure and immediate gratification; 5) Businesses are becoming increasingly political as well by expanding or decreasing their codes of conduct based on the latest interpretation of acceptable standards according to local and national news headlines; and 6) Families continue to suffer because of broken marriages, reduced parental oversight of their children's activities, parents cohabitating rather than pursuing a marriage commitment with their dating partners, and many other choices leading to an undertone of instability within a family unit.

The one section of culture which could have “held the line” over the last few decades and resisted the “pagan culture” trend as it swiftly moved across the U.S., was the church. But unfortunately, much of the Christian community chose to remain silent which gave the enemy a chance to grab footholds in every sector of society and widen the gap until Satan and his demonic forces took majority control over much of American culture. Thankfully, there were segments of the Body of Christ who remained faithful to preserve biblical values and fight the enemy within their spheres of influence. The seeds they planted previously continue to grow and awaken more followers of Jesus to the power and authority they carry through the indwelling of Holy Spirit so they can partner with Jesus for Kingdom transformation within their communities.<sup>56</sup>

Building Kingdom communities happens through a process of Kingdom-focused initiatives. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:9-10, “For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.” Whether someone lives in a big city or little town or is a single mother of two children, or a CEO or a janitor - it doesn't matter. They are all G-d's fellow workers having a sphere of influence to implement Kingdom initiatives that can influence the development of Kingdom communities

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<sup>56</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit – 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), Adobe Digital Edition PDF, Chapter 14- Streams of Renewal at the End of the Century, 406.

*because Jesus has already given them Kingdom authority to do so.* In Luke 10:19-20, Jesus states, “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” In the physical world, people experience hurt from others’ choices and tragic things do happen. Yet this verse implies that when the enemy is causing any kind of havoc within a person’s sphere of influence, Jesus grants that person His authority to defeat the enemy’s influence and transform those situations back into alignment with His will.<sup>57</sup>

When Jesus’ followers recognize the authority they carry through Holy Spirit, and learn to hear Jesus’ voice more clearly throughout their day, they can partner with Him more consistently to bring His Kingdom to earth within their communities. Genesis 1:26-28 states, “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” Dominion is another word for “authority” and based on Deuteronomy 11:24 and Joshua 1:3, Kingdom leaders are supposed to boldly govern their sphere of influence. This includes every place where the sole of their feet treads within their community, family, workplace, and other divine assignments. Essentially, Kingdom leaders take on a dual role of Watchman (Jer 51:12 / 1 Pet 5:8) and frontline infantry (2 Cor 10:4 / Eph 6:11) to oversee their territory just like a king or queen would make sure that everything is in alignment with what they feel is necessary within the territory they rule over. As stewards of King Jesus’ Kingdom, His followers are responsible to ensure that when something is out of alignment within their sphere of influence, they proactively put it back into alignment using biblical principles and godly responses. Jesus has a

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<sup>57</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 2 Volumes - Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), ProQuest Ebook Central, Accessed September 16, 2022, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=5399789>, Section IV-ii. Jesus’ Response about the Greater Honor (10:18– 20).

unique restoration plan for each sphere of influence, and it is essential to ask Him when and how to implement Kingdom transformation initiatives within it.

#### Personal Application – Shepherding Marketplace Leaders To Build Kingdom Communities

About two years ago, the Lord began to reshape my coaching and training business to support Kingdom leaders in having more impact within their sphere of influence for His glory. As I moved in that direction, He gave me the phrase “Marketplace Pastor” as a metaphor, and then led me to GATS to deepen my understanding of pastoral work through the M.A. Pastoral Ministry program. Within the last six months, I’ve continued to gain more revelation about my divine assignment. 1 John 5:14-15 says “This is the confidence we have in his presence: if we ask anything that accords with his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - then we know that we have what we have asked from him [CJB].” My mission in this assignment is to build and train up a network of Kingdom Leaders who refuse to be lukewarm (Rev 3:15-16) and are committed to walking in a manner worthy of their calling (Eph 4:1) as they partner with Jesus for His transformation initiatives within their sphere of influence. As those Kingdom leaders shift towards a Proverbs 11:25 lifestyle<sup>58</sup> in alignment with the Father’s heart, they will use their marketplace positions to let the Lord’s light shine through their words and actions (Mat 5:14-16) so that others will see the good things they do and eventually praise the Father in heaven - confidently trusting their job is to plant seeds, knowing only God gives the growth because they are His fellow workers; His field; His building (1 Cor 3:6-9).

The specific aspects of my divine assignment are linked to Acts 2 and Ephesians 4 (A2E4). Acts 2 focuses on the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter's Pentecostal sermon, and the fellowship of believers who entered a spirit-filled lifestyle. Ephesians 4 focuses on the unity of the body of Christ through their new life in Jesus. Within my assignment, the Lord has asked me to implement an

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<sup>58</sup> “The person who blesses others will prosper; he who satisfies others will be satisfied himself” (Proverbs 11:25 [CJB]).

A2E4 initiative throughout metro Atlanta, GA by inviting other marketplace Kingdom leaders to say “yes” to Jesus and proactively govern their sphere of influence. The A2E4 initiative is designed to be a network of Kingdom leaders who imitate the fellowship of believers from Acts 2:42-47. As part catalyst and part coach/trainer, I will support them in governing their spheres of influence well by helping them a) adopt an abundance mindset with radical generosity, trusting Jesus to provide whatever they need in any circumstance; b) surrender their schedule and checkbook to Jesus however He requests to advance his Kingdom plans and agenda; and c) embrace a bold confidence in utilizing Jesus’ authority within their Watchman and Frontline Infantry role, assuming a “Not on my watch” attitude against the enemy’s attempts to rule or take more ground within their divinely assigned sphere of influence. I will also ensure they understand the necessity of exhibiting a spirit-filled Kingdom lifestyle like the book of Acts, leading through the grace of Jesus (Eph 4:7 / Rom 12:3 and 6), and loving others from a foundation of Jesus' Great Commandment (Mat 22:36-40). In addition, I will encourage them to align every area of their life and work with biblical principles to maintain integrity with Jesus so they can access the fullness of His authority and power.

The strategy the Lord provided me to assist Kingdom Leaders to stay “on mission” with Him while governing their sphere of influence for Kingdom impact is to teach them to:

- Build a Kingdom “harvest” culture (Luke 10:2) that naturally exhibits the good news of Jesus (Mark 16:15) through utilizing scripture as their plumb line to ensure their outward actions are aligned with their inward heart posture (Heb 4:12)
- Reflect what Jesus and the disciples said and did by being a fully committed and authentic disciple first *before* discipling others (Mat 28:19-20 / Jer 24:7)
- Actively seek to understand what the Lord wants to do within their sphere of influence for His glory and dedicate their hearts to intercede to manifest the Lord’s will in those areas (Col 3:1 / 2 Chr 7:14)
- Develop a pastoral mindset to see the needs of those within their sphere of influence and listen for Jesus’ voice to intervene or assist as He leads (Acts 6:1-6)
- Authentically look for opportunities to be a servant-leader to those around them in loving partnership with Jesus’ will for their lives (Eph 4:16)

There are also several core values rooted in scripture that I will promote within the A2E4 initiative: be authentic (Ps 139:14), love well (Mat 22:37-40), assume an adventure mindset (Heb 11:1 and Rom 8:31), develop sincere relationships (Prov 27:17), espouse a faith-filled lifestyle (Prov 3:5-6), maintain inner peace & joy (Psalm 46:10 and Mat 6:31-34), adopt Jesus' eyes and attitude (Mark 6:34 and Mat 13:11, 52), and find passion-focused work opportunities (Eph 2:10). I am excited to see how Jesus shows up and shows off through the A2E4 initiative and look forward to watching Kingdom communities develop across metro-Atlanta over time.

### **Conclusion**

In a compilation of P.T. Forsyth's writings titled *The Gospel and Authority*, Forsyth states, "There must be authority. And by authority is meant something outside our personal opinion, will, vision, inclination, or taste. It is something which takes a place we never give. It imposes itself on us. It comes with power. It compels submission and obedience as the condition of weal, order, and progress."<sup>59</sup> Authentic followers of King Jesus submit to His authority in every area of their lives with a willing heart. They also utilize the power of Kingdom prayer and apply Jesus' authority through Holy Spirit to each circumstance they encounter in their personal and professional lives as well as in their communities. Transformation initiatives take time and dedication - sometimes even an entire lifetime. However, it doesn't matter how long it takes because Jesus is sovereign and His timing is always best. Rather than pushing personal agendas, Kingdom leaders pursue Jesus' agenda within the territories they govern as they partner with Him in building Kingdom communities. For a seasoned Kingdom leader, life is simple though not easy: All Jesus asks of them is to abide in Him, say "yes" to whatever He asks (day by day, minute by minute, second by second), and fully trust Him with the outcome of their Kingdom Community initiatives - knowing when they meet Him in heaven they will hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:23).

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<sup>59</sup> Marvin W. Anderson, *The Gospel and Authority – A P.T. Forsyth Reader* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), Adobe Digital Edition PDF, 133.

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