

Life in God's Kingdom

Leader's Notes and Bible Passages Available Online

By Shari Miller

(Please do NOT use the "if time permits" sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)

Share with a partner or the small group a life-changing moment or event in your life. Describe the feelings that you had during this life-changing time. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

During this Bible study, we will explore our life-giving God and the benefits His children enjoy in God's kingdoms of power, grace, and glory. In Matthew 6:10a, Jesus teaches us to pray: *Your kingdom come ...* As God's own dearly loved children given new life in Christ through Holy Baptism, we will explore the benefits of life in God's kingdom.

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, You are the Lord of life. You created this world and all that is in it, including us. Thank You for sending Your Son Jesus to be our Savior through His perfect life, suffering, and death. Because He rose to life from the dead, we, too, can look forward to eternal life. Thank You for giving us the Holy Spirit Who enables us to live our lives in Your kingdom of grace, sharing the Good News of salvation in Jesus. Be with us as we study Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Life in the Kingdom of Power

God rules as king over the whole universe. His kingdom of power is present everywhere. (Psalm 103:19) says: *The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.* According to **Genesis 1:1-2, 26a**, and **John 1:1-4, 14**, who was present at the creation of the world? **The Triune God**
Genesis 1:1-2: ¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. **God, Spirit of God**
Genesis 1:26a ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. "Us" – **Triune God**
John 1:1-4, 14: ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. **Word, God, Father, Jesus**

What does Jesus remind us of in **Matthew 28:18**?

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

What specific aspects of creation are discussed in the following Bible passages?

Genesis 2:7, 22 _____

⁷ then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made[a] into a woman and brought her to the man.

Job 38:1, 4-7

¹Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: ⁴"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶ On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Psalm 8:3

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place ...

Psalm 50:10-11

¹⁰ For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine.

Psalm 104:25–26

²⁵ Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. ²⁶ There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.

Psalm 139:13–14

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

How did God feel about His creation according to Genesis 1:31a?

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

How does God care for and sustain His creation? Read Psalm 145:8-9, 15-16; Psalm 147:8-9; and Luke 12:22–31.

Psalm 145:8-9, 15-16: ⁸The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ⁹ The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made. ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. ¹⁶ You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Psalm 147:8-9: ⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. ⁹ He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.

Luke 12:22-31: ²² And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

Faith Talk: How does God daily care for you, His dear child? Be specific. Make a list together. **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

If time permits: When we pray the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, do we pray for God's kingdom of power to come to us? Why or why not? (See *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, ©1986, 1991, Concordia Publishing House, Meaning to Second Petition and Question 213. See also *LSB*, page 324; *LW*, page 302.)

"213. For what do we pray in the Second Petition? We do not pray that God's kingdom of power would come, because that is already present everywhere ..."

Life in the Kingdom of Grace

Who lives in God's kingdom of grace? See Mark 1:15; John 3:5; John 18:36–37; Romans 14:17; and Colossians 1:1–14.

Mark 1:15: ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

John 3:5: ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

John 18:36-37: ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Romans 14:17: ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:13-14: ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Name at least five benefits that are given to a believer in Christ who lives in the kingdom of grace. See Ephesians 2:1–10 and Titus 2:11–14 for help in making the list. **Answers will vary. See examples below.**

Ephesians 2:1-10: ¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Titus 2:11-14: ¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

How does the Lord nurture and sustain believers who live in His kingdom of grace? **Means of Grace**

John 14:16–17 The Holy Spirit

¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Isaiah 55:11 God's Word

¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Matthew 26:26–28 The Lord's Supper

²⁶Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 4:26–29 The Word of God is spread and grows by the power of the Spirit

²⁶And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

Titus 3:4–6 Holy Baptism

⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

John 3:16 states emphatically: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* How is God's kingdom of grace extended? See **Matthew 5:14–16, Matthew 9:38; Acts 4:29; Galatians 6:2; and 2 Thessalonians 3:1.**

Matthew 5:14-16: ¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. **Christians shine the light of Christ into a dark world of sin; believers are His witnesses about the Good News of salvation in Jesus**

Matthew 9:38: ³⁸therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." **Believers who share the Gospel, pastors, teachers, etc.**

Acts 4:29: ²⁹And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness ... **Holy Spirit's power to tell the Good News of salvation boldly**

Galatians 6:2: ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. **Acts of mercy connected to God's Word**

2 Thessalonians 3:1: ¹Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you ... **Prayers that the Word will spread throughout the world**

Faith Talk: According to John 3:16: God loves the world and would have all believe in Christ as Savior and Lord. When was the last opportunity you had to share, by the power of the Spirit, the Good News of Jesus? How did you take advantage of the opportunity? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Life in the Kingdom of Glory

We are given eternal life because our Savior lived a perfect life, suffered, died for our sins, and rose victoriously from the dead. Our God reigns in His kingdom of glory for all eternity. Jesus encourages us in Revelation 2:10c: *be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life*. Who lives in God's kingdom of glory? See **Hebrews 12:1–3** and **Revelation 5:9–11**.

Hebrews 12:1-3: ¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. **Jesus, those who have died in the faith (Note to the Leader: See "heroes of faith" in Hebrews 11.)**
Revelation 5:9-11: ⁹ And they sang a new song [to the Lamb], saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" **Believers who have died in the faith (the communion of saints), angels, heavenly host, living creatures, and elders**

According to **Romans 5:1–5** and **Philippians 3:12–14**, how do Christians live life here on earth? **We live in the hope of eternal life because of Jesus Christ. We have peace with God through Christ, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We also rejoice in our sufferings. We press on as we look to Jesus and the hope of eternal life.**

Romans 5:1-5: ¹Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Philippians 3:12-14: ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Faith Talk: What does living and waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (**Titus 2:13**) mean in your life? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share what the hope of heaven means to them in their day-to-day living.**

Faith Talk: God loves life! He created us, makes us His own in the name of Jesus, keeps us in faith, and gives us the hope of eternal life with Him. How can you specifically advocate for life in all stages – from conception through the senior years? **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Faith Talk: Read **Revelation 21:1–7** and **22:1–5** for our Lord's glimpse into the kingdom of glory. Share with one another your picture of eternal life with your Savior Jesus. **Answers may vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Revelation 21:1-7: ¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

Revelation 22:1-5: ¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face,

and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Faith Walk:

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit will enable you to share the Good News of Jesus with those who need to hear.
2. Thank God that He has given you new life in Him through Baptism. Make sure you know the date you were baptized and plan a thanksgiving celebration on that day.
3. Praise God for making you part of His kingdom of grace and giving you the hope of living eternally with Him in the kingdom of glory.

Closing Prayer (sing or speak together): “Crown Him with Many Crowns” (LSB #525; LW #278; TLH #341).
