

*it's all about*

# THE KINGDOM

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**PRESENT** AND FUTURE

2014 JUNIOR YOUTH WEEK OF PRAYER



JUNIOR YOUTH WEEK OF PRAYER

*all about*  
**THE KINGDOM**  

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**PRESENT AND FUTURE**



the resource for Adventist youth leaders

## Information

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Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, as well as letters to the editor, youth ministry tips, youth volunteer service reports, programming and story ideas. Send manuscripts to YMA Editor at the address below.

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# Editorial

by Dr. Hiskia Missah, Associate Director, GC Youth Ministries

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**W**hen you visit the great country of Thailand, advertisements warmly greet you: 'Welcome to the Royal Kingdom of Thailand.' Yes, this country, which is known as the 'land of smiles,' and also as the Constitutional Monarchy of Kingdom, truly welcomes you to its beautiful land. It is a real world kingdom with a king and queen overseeing the territory and its inhabitants.

What about the kingdom of God? Is there a real kingdom that belongs to God? Recorded in Luke 4:43, Jesus says, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." Jesus confirmed that God has His own kingdom with the universe as its territory; He reigns as King, and all His created beings are the subjects of His kingdom. In another setting Jesus says, "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). So, the kingdom of God is a real, nonfictional kingdom.

Ellen G. White wrote: "The government of the kingdom of Christ is like no earthly government. It is a representation of the characters of those who compose the kingdom" (RH March 19, 1908).

How to enter into the kingdom of God? Jesus gives us a "visa" to enter His Kingdom. In John

3:3 we read, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In verse 5 He repeated, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

This is the kingdom of grace. To enter the kingdom of God, you must 'be born again,' so that when Jesus comes, you and I are eligible to enter His kingdom of glory. He will welcome us with the warmest greetings, "Welcome home, My children."

During this Week of Prayer you are going to study deeply about the kingdom of God. Do read the sermons, follow the directions and instructions, but more importantly, put it into practice, and soon we will enter into God's kingdom of glory.

Till then,

*Hiskia*

## For the Leader: Please Read This First

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1. **Start Your Planning Now.** We know that leadership sometimes changes at the end of the year, but please, if you will no longer be the AY leader next year, do not let that stop you from planning for this special week. Start your planning, develop your target, get your team together, and make sure your pastor is a part of that team.
2. **Global Youth Day Information.** Get information on the Global Youth Day project. This day will be the launch of the Youth Week of Prayer. Please visit our website, [www.gcyouthministries.org](http://www.gcyouthministries.org), or contact your local youth director to find out how you can participate.
3. **Commit Your Prayer Warriors.** Get a team of adults together who will commit to praying for you and your ministry on a regular basis. Make sure this is a group with whom you can confidentially share both your personal and ministry prayer needs.
4. **Choose a Theme Song.** Involve your youth choir. If your church does not have a youth choir, this is the perfect time to get one started. Pick out songs that you all like and which fit the topic of each evening, or choose a song for the entire week.
5. **Form a Week of Prayer Development/ Review Team.** Depending on the size of your church, this group can be four to eight persons who will go through all eight readings with you. Include on your team only interested and committed young adults and youth ministry leaders (Pathfinder, Sabbath School, etc., your pastor/s); this is important because it gives ownership to the entire group, rather than just you and your assistant. Ask the group to commit to meeting for at least three weeks—at least one week for four lessons, and an extra week to wrap things up. Be sure to identify the goal and direction you want to go, preferably at the first meeting, and choose a young person to speak for each day.
6. **Integrate Global Youth Day (GYD) into Your Week of Prayer Plans.** Ideally, GYD should be a time to teach youth how to sacrificially give of themselves by providing opportunities in the church and the community. If you are a small youth group and do not have the resources to arrange a community-based GYD event, you can use this opportunity to break down denominational barriers in the area by partnering with and pooling resources and ideas with other youth groups from other churches in your area.



# How to Use This Book

with a small or large group

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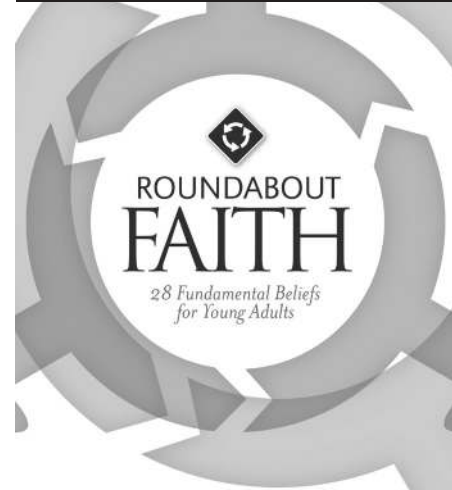
**Journal Space.** This book is designed to be filled with your thoughts. Use the space provided to record your reactions to the something you may hear in the sermon and the questions at the end of each day. It can also be used to write a prayer request or praise to God. Encourage participants to use it anyway they want. It's their journal! Tell them there are no rules, just guidelines. The important thing is to listen to the Lord and open their heart in response to His leading.

Leaders, if you take the time to read the daily readings prayerfully and with the anticipation that God will reveal new things to you, you will be surprised at what will flow through your pen or pencil onto the pages of these journals.

**Start a Prayer Journal.** Nothing is greater for your personal spiritual growth than time spent in prayer. Your youth group will grow as you grow. Prayer journaling will help you encounter God in new and exciting ways. You will be able to "track" your walk with God as you go back and review answered prayers and see how He has led you step by step each day. New, fresh ideas will come to mind as you spend time in His presence journaling your prayers. You can find many ideas online on starting and keeping a prayer journal. Just go to *www.google.com* and type in the words "starting a prayer journal."

**Daily Questions.** At the end of each sermon are questions designed to get you thinking. Form small groups and discuss these questions. Take a moment to really think about what they are asking. Listen to the Holy Spirit as He teaches you through Scripture. Encourage participants to record their thoughts in their journal.

**AVAILABLE @**  
[www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org)



TROY FITZGERALD

## ROUNABOUT FAITH

is a journey through 28 fundamental beliefs for young adults. Each chapter is framed in a format that celebrates the young adult search for meaning while challenging them to connect what they believe to how they live. In the same way that a roundabout flows in one direction around a center point, each lesson urges participants to yield their mind to Christ and merge their life with the word of God. This study can be used for personal study as well as with small groups.

# Introduction

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**T**his special week of prayer will focus on the kingdom of God, both present and future. To say that our world is “waxing old like a garment” is an understatement. Clearly, the signs tell us in shrill tones that something has gone deeply wrong on planet earth and no amount of human tinkering can fix it. With every vicious example of human depravity, devastating act of nature, breach of public trust, we cry for something better, something fairer, something not of this world.

It just so happens that God has not left us at the mercy of our broken plan with its broken human systems. He has given entrance into His glorious kingdom, a kingdom with a message of hope calibrated to salve the wounded inhabitants of planet earth. This week we will explore what it means to be a citizen of this kingdom, even as we await its complete fulfillment at the Second Coming of Jesus.

The objective of this week’s kingdom exploration is three-fold. By the end of this week, our prayer is that listeners will:

**KNOW** that the good news of the kingdom of God and its principles constitute the core message of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry.

**EXPERIENCE** the kingdom life now by being given an opportunity to follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives.

**EXPLORE** new ways to share the good news of salvation with everyone they meet. Fundamental to this exploration is the realization that, as a part of God’s remnant people, we are called to deliver God’s final warning to the world as outlined in the Three Angels’ Messages.

*all about*  
**THE KINGDOM**  

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**PRESENT AND FUTURE**

## DAY 1:

# In Search of Happiness



### Main Text

The Bible says, “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’” (**Mark 1:14-15**, NASB).

**B**hutan. Chances are you’ve never heard of this place. I have never been there, but I hear that it is quite breathtaking. Nestled in the Himalaya Mountains of Southeast Asia, the kingdom of Bhutan is one of the most naturally beautiful places on earth. It sports some of the most pristine animal habitats anywhere, and several rare species of birds call it home. For centuries, people from many different cultures have traveled to Bhutan to experience its simple way of life and bask in its natural beauty.

Bhutan has one other claim to fame that sets it apart from virtually every other country or kingdom on the planet—something the Bhutanese call “Gross National Happiness.” Before your eyes start to glaze over with boredom, let me explain a bit more.

The term “Gross National Happiness” was coined by one of Bhutan’s kings in the early 1970s. This king wanted his nation’s well-being to be measured by more than just its gross national product. He wanted the happiness of Bhutan’s citizens to be the sole measure of how well the nation was serving its people. In the decades that followed, the government of Bhutan developed a sophisticated way of surveying and measuring the happiness of its citizens—a survey that has now been copied by many western nations. In Bhutan, government policies are always measured by whether they will enhance or detract from the gross national happiness of not one or two rich citizens, or two or three powerful elites, but everyone. In Bhutan, if a policy won’t help people live happier lives, it never sees the light of day.

How’s that for good government?

## An Oasis Planet Earth?

In recent years, though, something strange has started to affect Bhutan. Care to guess what it is? Television. The long arm of the media has reached Bhutan and has begun to change the tastes of its citizens. Citizens who once valued simple pleasures now desire more “stuff” to make them happy — more than even the government can supply.

Friends, as long as we here on planet Earth, breathing sin-polluted air and living among sin-infected people, true happiness will always elude us. Whether you’re billionaire King Abdulla of Saudi Arabia, or Hip-Hop mogul Jay-Z, self-appointed “King of New York,” no earthly kingdom offers us true happiness. Sure, you can get all the toys — cars, clothes, money, even friends — but true happiness can never be bought. Some may beg to differ, but this much is absolutely true: No earthly kingdom lasts forever, no matter how rich or prosperous that kingdom may be.

While exiled on the Island of Patmos, God showed the prophet John this window into the future: “Then the seventh angel sounded,” John wrote, “and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever’” (Revelation 11:15, NASB).

### Ask the Audience:

1. What message did John hear?

ANSWER: The kingdom of this world was going to give way to the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

2. How long would God's kingdom last?

ANSWER: Forever and Ever.

When angels start blowing trumpets and yelling things out loud, that's a good time to pay attention. God is telling you to watch the blinking red light. This is IMPORTANT!

This kingdom revealed to John by God will fully come when Jesus returns to earth a second time, but Jesus spoke often about it when He came here the first time. In fact, it can be argued that Jesus spoke more about the kingdom of God than He did about anything else. He told everyone He knew about it, so there must be something to it, don't you think?

## First Words

The first recorded words of Jesus—the beginning of His ministry—are found in Mark 1:14-15. Care to guess what Jesus spoke about? You got it: the kingdom of God! You can tell a lot about what's in a person's heart by what comes out of their mouth. The kingdom of God was in Jesus' heart.

Jesus began talking about this great kingdom under very difficult circumstances. His cousin, John the Baptist, had just been put in prison. With John silenced, Jesus picked up where John left off. John had preached often about the kingdom of God. Ellen G. White writes: "Amid discord and strife, a voice was heard from the wilderness, a voice startling and stern, yet full of hope: 'Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' With a new, strange power it moved the people. Prophets had foretold the coming of Christ as an event far in the future; but here was an announcement that it was at hand" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 104).

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Jesus came to bring the kingdom of God even closer to human beings. Now John's message was about to be taken to a new level: the kingdom of God was now with men (Luke 17:21).

The Bible says, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15, NASB).

Notice that Jesus said two very important things that we must not miss:

- 1. THE TIME IS FULFILLED. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS HERE.**
- 2. REPENT AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL.**

For centuries the Jewish people had yearned for the day when the Messiah, the Savior, would show up to defeat their enemies and restore them. Yet, they somehow rejected Him. How did it happen? The anointed commentator Ellen G. White writes:

"The Messiah's coming had been first announced in Judea. In the temple at the birth of the forerunner had been foretold to Zacharias as he ministered before the altar. On the hills of Bethlehem the angels had proclaimed the birth of Jesus. To Jerusalem the magi had come in search of Him. In the temple Simeon and Anna had testified to His divinity. "Jerusalem, and all Judea" had listened to the preaching of John the Baptist; and the deputation from the Sanhedrin, with the multitude, had heard his testimony concerning Jesus. In Judea, Christ had received His first disciples. Here much of His early ministry had been spent. The flashing forth of

His divinity in the cleansing of the temple, His miracles of healing, and the lessons of divine truth that fell from His lips, all proclaimed that which after the healing at Bethesda He had declared before the Sanhedrin,--His Sonship to the Eternal." *(The Desire of Ages, p. 231)*

Jesus announced to anyone who would listen: "The time has come. God's kingdom is here. Embrace it and live!" The response He got was anything but warm. Some accepted Him, but the vast majority eventually rejected Him. Sadly, many missed their moment in the sun, the moment when God's kingdom came near, when Jesus held out citizenship papers to anyone who wanted in.

There is a kingdom where true happiness reigns supreme, where love is the rule of the day, and no one is ever sad. That kingdom is not of this world. It's a place called Heaven, and right now God is offering you a place in that kingdom.

**(Appeal)** Ask the Audience:

1. Have you ever missed your moment?
2. Have you ever wanted something really badly, only to miss it completely?

*[Tell the following story in your own words: allow one minute for silent prayer, then pray to close, thanking God for hearing us, and for offering us the kingdom of God.]*

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## Story

*Jeannette Kwakye is someone who you probably do not know. She is a British sprinter who made the women's 100m final at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. She did not achieve her dream of winning a medal, but she wasn't about to give up. For athletes who understand that one bad moment often paves the way for greater moments in the future, no failure is ever final. That's what Jeannette Kwakye told herself.*

*Jeannette circled August 3, 2012 on her calendar and began training for the 2012 Games in London, England. She would be on "home turf" this time and she would shine. But a funny thing happened along the way. A series of injuries in 2009 and 2010 re-occurred in 2012 and her dream was dashed. It ended in a race during the first heat of the World Championships in Helsinki. Slowed by injuries, Jeannette finished last and missed out on a spot on the British Olympic team. She walked directly out of the stadium and wept, her Olympic dream over.*

*Circumstances beyond her control doomed Jeannette Kwakye's dream, but she picked herself up and embraced the Games once they began. Even though she could not compete, she determined to accept her situation and move on.*

Ask the Audience:

What about you?

Is there something preventing you from embracing God's call to join His kingdom?

*In the next minute, while everyone is quiet, take a moment to talk to God directly. Thank Him for sending Jesus to earth and opening a way for you to become a part of His kingdom.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did God need to introduce fallen human beings to His kingdom? Didn't we already know about it?
2. Why did the Jews fail to recognize Jesus or the kingdom He represented?
3. What is the meaning of true happiness? How do we find it?
4. What are some of the things today that distract us from seeing God's kingdom?

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## DAY 2:

# That's Why I Came



## Main Text

“When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. But He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose” **(Luke 4:42,43)**.

“**W**hen I read those text messages I kind of just put my phone down and froze, and I just basically cried. I cried in my mom’s arms.”

“And I didn’t know what to think about it. It just kind of hit me hard, like why would some person want to send another person these types of texts? And then I realized that maybe they are trying to get the reaction from me, and trying to make themselves feel better for them, because maybe they did not have that type of warmth from their parents, where they may need that. Or, I don’t know.”

With those kind words, Shea Shahan melted the hearts of millions of people as she spoke about possibly the most challenging moment in her

life. Shea is 18 years old, and looks like many other 18-year-olds, except for one important difference: She has cerebral palsy, “the result of a severe brain injury that she suffered at birth.” Cerebral palsy is a disorder of the brain that may affect the way a person talks, moves, eats, or speaks. Depending on what part of the brain is affected, people suffering from this disorder cannot control certain body movements. Their legs may flutter or suddenly move, some muscles don’t relax, and their speech is often impaired. All of this makes people with cerebral palsy easy targets for ridicule, and Shea Shahan was no different.

Shea, who has the mental capacity of an 8-year-old, is a junior in high school. One day she

began receiving hateful text messages that called her “ugly” and urged her to “kill urself.” “U need to blame yourself for everyone hating you,” wrote one teen. “I’m pretty sure you’re going to hell,” said another. And those are the ones that I can actually tell you about. Most of the messages are too vulgar and horrifying to mention in your hearing.\*

## Heart Trouble

In case you have missed it, we are living in a very messed up world. Yes, there are a lot of good things happening on earth—new scientific discoveries are happening almost daily, new technologies are revolutionizing the way we live—but one thing seems to be getting worse: the ability to hate. The teen prophet Jeremiah captured it best when he wrote, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9, NASB).

In our fallen condition, we humans will do things to hurt each other and scarcely ever give it a second thought. Like the children aiming their hatred at Shea Shahan, we seem to be losing all sense of right and wrong. The biggest problem we humans have is a heart problem, and I’m not referring to heart disease. By heart I mean the seat of our thinking, our brains, the “CPU” (Central Processing Unit) of our bodies. Like some alien computer virus, sin has infected our thinking and changed the way we operate. No wonder God sent Jesus from the “Help Desk” in Hheaven to earth. We needed fixing!

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## The Kingdom Comes

Jesus was keenly aware of our human dilemma when He began His public ministry. In fact, why don't we look at Jesus' "mission statement" to see exactly what He came to earth to do. Let's read together from Luke 4:14 to 19.

"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and the recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.'"

Jesus came to help the Shea Shahans of the world, and the classmates who bullied her. He came to set oppressed people free, to give sight to blind people—both physical and spiritual eyesight, and to preach that this was the time when God was pouring out His favor on the planet to all who would accept it. This mission statement helps to form the very core of Jesus' Kingdom message. Why? Because it expresses the very heart of God, His wonderful love for us, in spite of our "messed up" condition.

When Jesus spoke this truth, it deeply affected His hearers: "Jesus stood before the people as a living expositor of the prophecies concerning Himself. Explaining the words He had read, He spoke of the Messiah as a reliever of the oppressed, a liberator of captives, a healer of the afflicted, restoring sight to the blind, and revealing to the world the light of truth. His impressive manner and the wonderful significance of His words thrilled the hearers with a power they had never felt

before. The tide of divine influence broke every barrier down; like Moses, they beheld the Invisible. As their hearts were moved upon by the Holy Spirit, they responded with fervent amens and praises to the Lord" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 237).

## Why He Came

Jesus didn't stop at His mission statement. If you continue reading Luke 4 you will also see that shortly after sharing these words about His mission, Jesus left the surging crowds in Galilee, telling them: "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43, NASB).

Don't miss a very important word mentioned in Jesus' statement. That word is "also." Why is this word important? It is important because it connects Jesus' mission statement (Luke 4:14-19) to the kingdom of God spoken of in Luke 4:43. Jesus is saying, in effect, the good news that I shared with you guys at the synagogue yesterday is all about the kingdom of God. So, I've got to go preach this good news about the kingdom of God in other places too. This was the main reason why Jesus came to earth!

"But why should we care?" I hear you say. "So what if Jesus came to earth to preach good news about the kingdom of God. The world is still messed up. If the kingdom of God is so great, why aren't more people into it?"

Those are valid questions. The answers are suggested by the response that Jesus got on the day when He first spoke about the kingdom of God. Jesus told the people at the synagogue that they were looking at the fulfillment of Isaiah's

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prophecy – which He quoted in Luke 4:14-19 – about the one who would come to set captives free, give sight to the blind, heal the brokenhearted, and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. The people of His hometown said, “but aren’t you Joseph’s son? All of a sudden you think you’re the Messiah?”

When Jesus rebuked them for their failure to believe in Him (Luke 4:24-27), all the people “were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff” (verse 28). They liked the message, but they rejected the Messenger. That was a pattern that was repeated many times during the short span of Jesus’ public ministry, and it’s a pattern that still repeats itself today.

Yet, the words of Jesus spoken that day at the synagogue still ring true today, especially when those who follow Him are living examples of God’s love in a broken world.

In a world where Shea Shahan suffers ridicule for a condition that she did not choose and cannot control, God needs you and me to be the kingdom of God so others can see that it is real! The kingdom of God is not without power to affect our lives, but it is only as we live for God that the kingdom of God begins to make sense to people who question whether it’s real or not.

## Appeal

Can you make a difference in the world? Can you reveal God’s kingdom to a broken world? Savanna Bukant believes you can.

*[Share the following story in your own words.]*

“As a high school senior in Vancouver, Wash., **Savannah Bukant** was faced with the task of completing a community experience project. Savannah chose to funnel her passion for orphans into the project and contacted Compassion International to see how she could help. She decided to raise the funds to start a cottage for orphaned children in Ethiopia. The amount needed was daunting, and the time needed to raise it was almost enough to make Savannah consider a different project. But she said yes—to raising \$15,000 in three months!

“I was definitely apprehensive to begin with,” says Savannah. “But the one thing that held me together was the truth that God had called me to this project.”

Savannah dove into the project, and during the next three months she held a walk-a-thon, benefit concert, car wash, letter campaign, and church presentation! At the end of those three months, she had raised \$18,000 to help orphans in Ethiopia!

Savannah is realistic about the challenges of changing the world. But she maintains that with passion, support, and hard work, anyone can make a difference.

“If you want to change the world, go ahead and change the world,” she says. “Nobody is stopping you. You may encounter dilemmas or opposition, but push past them. God will remain by your side.” \*\*

(\*Source: <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2013/10/16/i-have-a-few-things-to-say-to-those-kids-glenn-becks-passionate-and-emotional-message-to-the-students-who-bullied-a-special-needs-teen/>)

\*\*<http://ecmagazine.org/2011/06/24/teens-whove-made-a-difference/>)

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[Close by saying the following]

If you want to share the kingdom of God with the world as Jesus did, but you're not quite sure what you can do, would you raise your hands? Jesus chose to live in complete dependence on how His Father would lead and guide Him from day to day. That's why He prayed so much. He needed God's guidance through the person of the Holy Spirit. Let us pause right now and ask God to show us how to reveal His kingdom to the world.

Form groups of two or three and pray, asking God to reveal His love through us in practical ways every day. After two to three minutes, close this special moment with a prayer of your own, thanking Jesus for coming to earth and showing us the love of God at the center of His kingdom.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We have heard for many years that Jesus died to save us from our sins. How did Jesus' death on the cross reveal the kingdom of God? Was this a part of the mission Jesus spoke of in Luke 4:43?
2. The Jews reacted harshly to Jesus that day in the synagogue in Nazareth. What are some of the ways that people today

react to the teachings of Jesus? What are some of the parallels between the reaction in Jesus' day and the reaction today?

3. For what kind of kingdom were the Jews in Jesus' day looking?
4. If God sent Jesus to tell the world about His kingdom, that's a sure sign that the kingdom of God is a big deal. It is very important to know what it is and understand it. If God didn't send Jesus, how might He have revealed to us the truth about the kingdom of God?

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**Did you know that  
covenant groups can  
help grow your youth  
ministry in many  
ways?**

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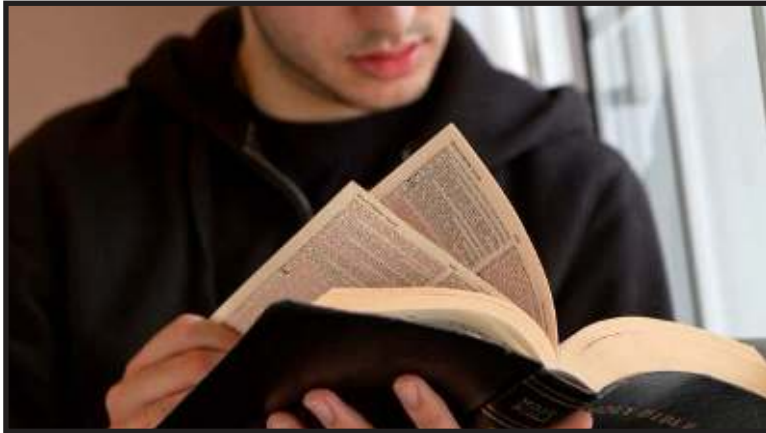
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## DAY 3:

# Power Surge



## Main Text

“And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing” **(Luke 9:1, 2).**

**T**his week we have been learning about the kingdom of God—its meaning, its principles, its lifestyle, and its soon fulfillment. On the first day of our study, we learned that the kingdom of God was the first thing that Jesus spoke about when He began His public ministry. Yesterday we found out that telling the world the good news about the kingdom of God was the chief reason why Jesus was sent to earth (Luke 4:43). Today we will see that Jesus did not just preach and teach about the kingdom of God, He also enlisted the help of others in spreading the word that a new kingdom had arrived on planet earth, one that was accepting all comers.

As we begin today, I'd like to ask you to try something with me. If you are seated in a row, I would like the person sitting on the right end of the row—your right, which is my left—to think of a one sentence secret message that they would pass to the person sitting at the opposite

end of the row (without moving). They will have to whisper it in the ear of the person next to them, who will in turn do the same thing to the next person, until it reaches the target person at the opposite end. Does everyone understand what we are doing?

**[NOTE TO PRESENTER:** *Explain the activity again. The objective of this activity is to see whether the original message stays intact as it is passed from one person to another. Give the group one minute to complete the activity. After one minute, continue by saying the following.*]

Have the messages been passed? Okay. In 30 seconds or so, I would like the last person who received the message to go to the person who sent the message and repeat the message to them. Let's do that now.

*[After a minute or so, ask the following to the people who originally sent the messages.]*

Would all the people who were first to send the message please raise your hands? Was the message you sent the same as the message you heard from the last person to receive it? Was anything lost during the transmission of the message?

It is a known fact that messages tend to change when they are passed on from one person to the next. We humans have a tendency to add or subtract information when passing it on to others. It's one of those quirks that make us special. Things change with the telling, one might say. While this can sometimes be a bad thing, there is also an upside to it, as we will learn today.

## Kingdom Power

If you have your Bibles with you, let's go to Matthew 9:35. This powerful Scripture says, "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness." Yesterday we learned that Jesus moved from place to place preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God, but that's not all He did, as this verse clearly demonstrates. He also healed every kind of disease and sickness He saw along the way.

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I want you to picture the scene with me. A stranger comes walking into town. He has no luggage or traveling gear. He is not overly handsome (Isaiah 53:2), though one can immediately tell from His noble bearing that there is something truly special about Him. There is a peace about Him, an easy way of meeting and greeting, sharing and caring. He stands out—for all the right reasons—and when He opens His mouth, everyone within earshot listens.

But there is something else about Jesus that signals that He is “super-normal.” Jesus does more than just talk; He actually heals broken bodies and broken hearts, rejuvenates paralyzed limbs and forgives sins, restores sight and refines purpose. Do you see the dual nature of Jesus’ ministry? He is both “heavenly minded” and earthly good, as opposed to some Christians who are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. That is to say, they talk about Hheaven, but never actually do anything to help make people’s lives better down here on earth. Jesus did both, and we Christians are called to do the same.

Jesus preached, but He healed more than He preached. He took time with people because He cared for both their spiritual and physical well-being. This aspect of His ministry was in stark contrast to the ministry of the Pharisees and Sadducees, whose messages lacked power and love.

Before long, Jesus’ preaching about the kingdom of God became associated with miraculous expressions of power. With every touch of healing, people began to see the kingdom as more than just “pie in the sky” mumbo jumbo. The kingdom spoken about by Jesus was real and it had real power to change lives.

## Passing On the Power

Now if you or I had such power, would we readily give it to others? We humans are not very good at giving things away. Here's what I mean.

The story is told of a woman who invited some friends to her home for dinner. She was known as a really terrific cook, so when you got an invitation you knew that you were about to eat food that would set your taste buds to dancing. Savory stews, beautiful broths, captivating casseroles, delectable deserts—she could do it all, and do it well.

During one of her meals, a guest did something that no guest had done before: they asked for a recipe. Friends, from the reaction of the cook, you would have thought that the guest had asked for her right lung. Her jaw tightened, her expression hardened, and the room grew silent.

"No," came the terse response. She did not explain why she did not want to share her recipe. There was nothing but awkward silence.

I would like to tell you that the guest was so offended that she got up and left the meal, but that would be a lie. Her pride was somewhat wounded, but she stayed until the very end of the meal—no doubt because the food was just too good to pass up.

Isn't that how many of us are? When we possess the power or ability to do something that brings recognition or prestige to us, we usually don't share that thing with others. Why not? Because deep down we fear that if someone else learns to do that special thing for which people come to us, we

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wont be needed anymore. Nothing, my friends, could be further from the truth.

It is often the case that people flock to those who are givers, those who share what they have. This was one of the signature truths of Jesus' earthly life and ministry. Jesus gave His power to the disciples, as today's main text explains.

About this passing of the power, Ellen G. White writes: "The disciples' message was the same as that of John the Baptist and of Christ Himself: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' They were to enter into no controversy with the people as to whether Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah; but in His name they were to do the same works of mercy as He had done. He bade them, 'Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give'" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 350).

Can you imagine how the disciples felt? Here was Jesus, the one whom they had seen do miracle after miracle, offering them the opportunity to touch lives as He did, to mend hearts as He had—all through the power and equipment of the Holy Spirit. How would you feel if you had such power?

Jesus gave the disciples the kingdom message and power to demonstrate the reality of that kingdom. They were to preach the urgency of the kingdom, but this was to be accompanied by acts that showed the love of God for people right where they were. This is the beauty of God's wonderful kingdom: It becomes more and more real as we both talk about and live its principles.

# Appeal

Have you ever wished that you had the power to do the things that Jesus did? Have you ever longed for the power that characterized Jesus’ life and ministry? If you have, then you are like most Christians. We all long to be like Jesus. Isn’t that why we became Christ followers – Christians?

Jesus seemed to suggest that we too would one day do His works, on a more grand scale than He did. John 14:12, says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.” Jesus knew that once He returned to Heaven, the Holy Spirit would shortly thereafter be poured in full measure upon all who believed in and followed Jesus. The Book of Acts demonstrates that Jesus was right when He made that statement.

Friends, if we want Jesus’ power, one of the first things we must do is invite Him to come into our hearts, to take up residence with us. We must give Him free reign in our lives by confessing and repenting of our sins. Why don’t we do that now?

If you would like to welcome Jesus into your heart, if you would like to ask Him to take control of your life, then join me down front so we can ask Jesus to come into our lives.

*[Note to Presenter: Continue to ask the people to join you down front. Allow a few minutes for them to respond. Pray in your heart asking God to move them to respond to the appeal. Once you feel impressed, close with a prayer asking God to come into our hearts and change us from within. Then ask Him to give us power to share the blessings of God’s kingdom with others and use us to make their lives better.]*

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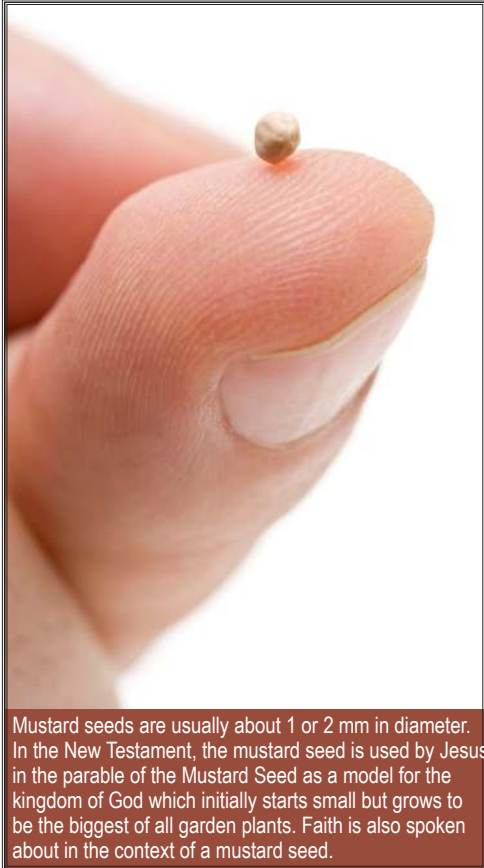


## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did Jesus give power to the disciples without first preparing them to use it? How do you think He got them ready to do ministry?
2. It is clear from reading the Gospels that the disciples were not "perfect people" when Jesus entrusted the message of the Kingdom to them. For instance, Peter talked too much, James and John had anger issues, Thomas was a doubter, and Judas was an embezzler. Why would Jesus give such a powerful message to guys who had such problems?
3. The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different people. Read about them in 1 Corinthians 14. Why does God give such a diversity of gifts? What happens to God's kingdom when His people use their gifts and talents?
4. "The followers of Christ are to labor as He did. We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the suffering and afflicted. We are to minister to the despairing, and inspire hope in the hopeless" (The Desire of Ages, p. 350). List three practical things that you can do to help the hurting today.

## DAY 4:

# It's Like This



Mustard seeds are usually about 1 or 2 mm in diameter. In the New Testament, the mustard seed is used by Jesus in the parable of the Mustard Seed as a model for the kingdom of God which initially starts small but grows to be the biggest of all garden plants. Faith is also spoken about in the context of a mustard seed.

### Main Text

"So He was saying, 'What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?' **(Luke 13:18).**

### NOTE TO PRESENTER:

*Today's presentation will feature several different views of the kingdom of God. The objective is to give your audience a sense of the nature of God's kingdom. This is essential since the kingdom of God is only partially experienced on earth. As we'll learn later in the week, the true fulfillment of the Kingdom will only be realized when Jesus returns to earth. Also, when discussing the parables of Jesus about the Kingdom, feel free to show pictures or videos of the things Jesus mentions. Assemble these ahead of time.*

Some things are really hard to explain. Do you believe that? The October 1991 edition of *Bits and Pieces* magazine carried the following true story that makes the point.

"A woman's red station wagon was crushed by an elephant at a circus. The owners of the animal apologized, explaining that the animal, for some reason, simply liked to sit on red cars. In spite of the damage, the woman's car was still drivable. But on the way to the garage she was stopped short by an accident involving two other cars just ahead of her. When the ambulance arrived a few minutes later the attendants took one look at her car, then ran over to assist her. 'Oh, I wasn't involved in this accident,' she explained. 'An elephant sat on my car.' The ambulance attendants quickly bundled her off to the hospital for possible shock and head injuries, despite the lady's vehement protests."

Some things are just really difficult to explain. Try explaining how a black cow can eat green grass and produce white milk. Ask a scientist near you why human beings yawn. In fact, while you're at it, ask him or her why nine out of ten people in the world are right-handed. Some things are really, really difficult to explain.

This is one of the problems Jesus faced when trying to explain the origin and nature of the kingdom of God. Now let's be clear, Jesus was not having a problem in understanding the kingdom. After all, He was from this kingdom. He was an emissary sent from God to earth to show us what the kingdom of God—also referred to as the kingdom of Heaven by Jesus—was like. So, Jesus knew all about the kingdom. Explaining the message to fallen human beings, well, that was a different story.

A 1908 statement by Ellen G. White may help to explain why Jesus' task was so difficult: "The government of the kingdom of Christ is like no earthly government. It is a representation of the characters of those who compose the kingdom. 'Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God?' Christ asked, 'or with what comparison shall we compare it?' He could find nothing on earth that would serve as a perfect comparison. His court is one where holy love presides, and whose offices and appointments are graced by the exercise of charity. He charges His servants to bring pity and loving-kindness, His own attributes, into all their office work, and to find their happiness and satisfaction in reflecting the love and tender compassion of the divine nature on all with whom they associate" (*Review and Herald*, March 19, 1908).

Jesus wondered what He could use to explain the nature of the kingdom of God. The answer was found in a tool that He used often. He looked for common things that He knew His listeners would know and understand, and He used these things to share truth. We call these things parables or stories—metaphors that are used to teach deeper truths.

## A Mustard Seed

In Matthew 13, Jesus uses several images to show what the kingdom of Heaven is like. Let's look at a few of those together. Go with me to Matthew 13: 31-32. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 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" (NASB).

*[Show picture of mustard seed. Then show picture of a mustard tree.]*

Have you ever seen a mustard seed? How big is it? A mustard seed is one of the tiniest seeds. The people listening to Jesus grew mustard trees. They had seen mustard seeds many times. When Jesus likened the kingdom of Hheaven to a mustard seed, their eyes widened and their ears perked up.

Jesus then took them to a higher level of understanding. The kingdom of Hheaven is small but it grows in the hearts and lives of all who accept it. The Jewish leaders who watched Jesus intently dismissed He and His small band of followers as "nothings." He couldn't possibly be the Messiah because His followers were a tiny speck, not much to look at. That's precisely why Jesus chose a mustard seed to be the center of this parable of the kingdom.

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: "The *sinapis nigra*, or black mustard, of Palestine commonly reaches a height of 6 to 12 feet, with branches an inch or more thick. Here the figure of a tree represents the triumph of the gospel message throughout the world. The kingdom and its subjects might appear insignificant now, but, says Christ, this will not always be the case." (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 5, p. 409*)

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In this seemingly simple parable, Jesus was communicating multiple truths about the nature of the kingdom of God.

What are some of those truths? Here are but two of them:

1. The kingdom of Heaven grows. People who follow Jesus may appear to be insignificant or easily overlooked, but their ranks will continue to grow as long as time shall last.
2. It's worth it to be a member of the kingdom of Heaven, even if it may not yet appear in all its fullness.

But Jesus didn't stop at the mustard seed. He told more parables about the kingdom of Heaven. In Matthew 13, He said it was like:

1. **Yeast** (verses 33-35). While the mustard seed represented the kingdom's growth in size, yeast represented the growth that would happen in people who accept Jesus as Savior and Lord and live according to kingdom principles.
2. **Hidden Treasure** (verse 44). This parable represents the search for the gospel message at the heart of the kingdom of God. Where is it found? It is found in a field called the Bible. The Scriptures are where we find the good news of salvation. The man in this parable stumbles across the treasure, and nothing will stop him from owning it. That's how precious the truth of the kingdom is.
3. **A Costly Pearl** (verses 45-46). In this parable, a businessman goes looking for a priceless pearl. He represents those who are searching for the gospel of the kingdom of Heaven and will do all within their power to obtain it. That's the effort needed to seek after God (Jeremiah 29:13).

4. **The Dragnet** (verses 46-49). A dragnet was a type of weighted fishing net used in large bodies of water. When pulled up it would draw in everything that it covered in the sea. Jesus used this parable to explain that the kingdom of Heaven was open to all people, no matter their ethnicity, personality, attitude, or economic status. All would be welcomed. Isn't that amazing?!

## Appeal

What an amazing kingdom God has for us! It's a place where all are welcomed. It's a place that grows bigger and bigger, and the people who enter it also grow in their walk with Jesus. Its message is like treasure that is worth wagering everything to obtain. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of Heaven, is the place where God wants all of us to be citizens.

My appeal today is for those who may not feel the urgency to be a part of God's kingdom. Maybe you're bored with church, or unmotivated to have a walk with God. Maybe you don't really pray as much as you used to, or you're on the verge of giving up on God. If you just want to reconnect with Jesus, stand to your feet and repeat these words after me:

*"Jesus, I want to be closer to you. I want to be more passionate about my relationship with you. I want to love your Holy Word, and live it every day. You have promised that if anyone opens the door to You, You would come in and make a home with them.*

*"We ask you now to come into our hearts right now, dear God. Through your Holy Spirit, renew our commitment and make us hungry for a deeper relationship with you.*

*"Thank You for hearing and answering our prayer. Amen."*

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Jesus use parables? Why didn't He simply explain Himself in some other way?
2. What prevented Jesus' listeners from fully understanding His teachings? What prevents you from grasping the meaning of Jesus' teachings? Does one need to have a relationship with Him in order to understand truth?
3. If the parable of the dragnet means that all people are welcomed into God's kingdom, why do some Christians erect "barriers" that keep people out? What are some of those barriers?
4. Are all Christian denominations part of the kingdom spoken of by Jesus? Explain your answer.
5. Write a modern-day parable to explain the kingdom of God to someone who has never heard of it. Finishing these words: "The kingdom of Heaven is like . . ."

## DAY 5:

# The Best News Ever



## Main Text

“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” **(Matthew 24:14)**.

### **[NOTE TO PRESENTER:**

*The heart of the kingdom of God is the good news of salvation. Jesus came to earth, took on the form of a man, lived a perfect life, died for the sins of the world, destroyed the power of death by rising from the dead, and is presently interceding on behalf of sinners. Pray earnestly prior to this message that God will help you communicate it clearly and with His power. ]*

**T**he day didn't start well for Jessica Robles. The single mom was caught shoplifting at a Miami, Florida supermarket. Her basket cart held more than 300 dollars worth of groceries. She had safely made it out of the store and was on her way with the stolen loot.

That's when a police officer approached her. She knew that she was in trouble. The Publix grocery store from which she had just stolen the items had alerted the police.

After a few questions from Officer Vicki Thomas, Jessica Robles confessed to her crime and prepared herself for the ride down to the police station. When the officer asked why she had stolen the groceries, Robles said that her children were hungry, and she had no money for groceries.

The police officer then checked her criminal record and discovered that Ms. Robles had never been in trouble with the law. She felt strongly that locking up the young mother



would not do any good. She then did something that got picked up by news outlets across the United States.

Officer Thomas walked Ms. Robles back into the Publix grocery store, pulled out her debit card, and bought 100 dollars worth of groceries for the young mother. That's when the tears began to flow.

When they got the groceries back to the Robles home, the woman's hungry sons began immediately rummaging through the bags. It was clear that they had been very hungry.

"To see them go through the bags when we brought them in, it was like Christmas," Officer Thomas mused. "That 100 dollars to me was worth it."\*

## Kingdom Message

Isn't that a great story? Wow! Officer Vicki Thomas, a 23-year veteran of the police force, had not lost her compassion. Police officers often talk about how difficult their jobs are, the constant danger, the gruesome things they sometimes see. It often leaves them deeply wounded and jaded about life, but not so with Vicki Thomas. She saw the hurt on the face of a young mother with no way to feed her children, and she gave her grace!

There are two definitions of the word grace. Grace can be used to describe something or someone that moves with elegance and refinement. But in Christianity, grace is the free and unmerited favor of God that is lavishly poured out on

sinners. Did you get that? Grace is getting something that we do not deserve, and not just a little bit of it. It's getting more than we deserve.

There is only one act in human history that could possibly fit the bill, and that act was the coming of Jesus Christ as Messiah to save the entire human race from sin. The Greek word for gospel means "good news." Originally, "it referred to the 'good news' that the Messiah had indeed come to earth, as foretold by the prophets. Eventually the term was applied to the narrative of the life of Jesus, and later, to the various documents, or Gospels, in which the record is preserved" (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, p. 567).

## Connections

Notice that the gospel is the good news that the Messiah, the Savior, had come to earth. Furthermore, the story of the Messiah's coming, His work on earth as recorded in Scripture, is also part of the good news.

Jesus, more than any other person in the history of the world, understood the significance of His coming to earth. Not only that, Jesus said that the good news about salvation was part of the good news about the coming of the kingdom of God to earth. Did you get that?

Let's listen to Jesus' own words to get the picture clearly. While preparing His disciples for His death and the difficult times that would precede the end of the world, Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14).

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Notice how Jesus connects the good news of salvation with the kingdom of God. Let's go to Luke 17:20-21 to see the connection even more clearly: "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.'" Jesus was literally saying, "Don't bother going here and there looking for the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God's grace is already here. I am an emissary of that kingdom."

Why were the Pharisees pressing Jesus to show them a sign that the kingdom He spoke of was truly the Messiah's kingdom? Because they were looking for a kingdom that would overthrow the Roman Empire and set up Jewish rule. After hearing Jesus preach for two-plus years and seeing no change in the political structure of the day, they thought Him to be a fraud.\*

## Yearning for Good News

The Pharisees had missed the significance of Jesus, but the common people did not. In words that touch the heart, God's servant, Ellen G. White, captures the spiritual desperation of the people who longed to see the Messiah come:

"At this time the systems of heathenism were losing their hold upon the people. Men were weary of pageant and fable. They longed for a religion that could satisfy the heart. While the light of truth seemed to have departed from among men, there were souls who were looking for light, and who



## Appeal

*[NOTE TO PRESENTER: This appeal is meant to elicit the names of people who may want to learn more about the good news of salvation. Speak with your youth pastor or Bible worker about organizing a class or youth group so that people who respond to the appeal can learn more about the gospel.]*

I began today's message by telling you the wonderful act of grace that Jessica Robles received from Officer Vicki Thomas when she took items from a grocery store without paying for them. Robles deserved punishment, but what she got instead was "good news." She received unmerited favor. Not only was she not arrested, but the officer actually *paid* for her sin: she paid for the groceries that Jessica Robles had taken.

Now think with me for a moment. How do you think Jessica Robles responded to what Officer Thomas did for her? Did she run off without saying thank you? Did she wait until the officer left, and then laugh off the whole incident? Do you think she continued to steal items from that grocery store?

My friends, we have been given a very similar act of grace by God. If anyone ought to be happy about life, it ought to be Christians who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Amen?

So here's the big question for you today: Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Do you know what He has done for you? If you would like to know more about what Jesus has done for you, if all of this kingdom stuff is new to you, but you would like to learn more about it, just raise your hand and hold it up.



## DAY 6:

# Your Turn



### Main Text

The Bible says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (**Matthew 24:19, 20**).

*[NOTE TO PRESENTER: The emphasis of today’s message is the call of God for each of His followers to join the gospel chorus, the group that shares the news of salvation with the world.]*

I hope that this week of prayer has been a blessing to you. We’ve been examining the special kingdom of God that came when Jesus, the Messiah, arrived on earth. The Prophet John said of Jesus: “He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men” (John 1:2-3, NASB). That’s a pretty powerful statement, don’t you think?

From this statement we immediately learn that Jesus was no ordinary person. He was literally

from out of this world, and things He did and thought were equally supernatural. It should come as no surprise then that when Jesus died, His disciples were distraught. The One to whom they had pinned all their hopes and dreams was now dead. No more water into wine. No more exorcisms. No more miraculous healings. No more powerful preaching. No more bear hugs and words of encouragement. All they had now were memories of the times they had with Jesus, and that just was not cutting it.

Ellen G. White writes this about the disciples following the death of Jesus:

“After the death of Christ the disciples were well-nigh overcome by discouragement. Their Master had been rejected, condemned, and crucified. The priests and rulers had declared scornfully, “He

saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him" (Matthew 27:42). The sun of the disciples' hope had set, and night settled down upon their hearts. Often they repeated the words, 'We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). Lonely and sick at heart, they remembered His words, 'If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31). "Jesus had several times attempted to open the future to His disciples, but they had not cared to think about what He said. Because of this His death had come to them as a surprise; and afterward, as they reviewed the past and saw the result of their unbelief, they were filled with sorrow" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 25).

It was at this point, during the darkest moment of their sadness, that the risen Jesus appeared to them. Acts 1: 3 says, "To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." Locked in a room and fearful that the people who crucified Jesus would come after them, Jesus appeared to the disciples.

Did you notice a key phrase in that statement? What did Jesus speak to the disciples about? Let's say it together: THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

When Jesus appeared to the disciples, Ellen White notes that He prepared them for life ahead. For forty days He helped and encouraged them, lifted and blessed them, directed and empowered them. But Jesus spent more time talking to them about the kingdom of God than He did about anything else. Jesus challenged the disciples to do something for Him. Do you know what He asked them to do? Let's look at Matthew 28:19-20.

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Jesus said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This statement is called the great Gospel Commission. Do you know what "commission" means? To commission someone is to give that person an instruction or command, a duty, a responsibility, a task, a project, a job, an assignment.

Jesus was not *asking* the disciples to go teach people about the kingdom—He was *commanding* them to do it. He's saying, in effect, after all that I have done for you, and all that you have seen me do for others, having now risen from the dead, I am passing my mantle to you. I want you to tell the whole world—every group of people you can find—about the good news of salvation.

They were commanded to do some very specific things. What were they called to do?

1. Make disciples of all nations.
2. Baptize people. Baptism is the public symbol that one has given his or her heart to God and is seeking to be born again, made new, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit (John 3).
3. Teach them about kingdom living. Teach them how to observe the commandments and how to live in relationship with Christ.

Is there a bigger calling in the world than this one? Is there anything more compelling than helping men and women, boys and girls, come to know Jesus? I don't think so! The disciples' heads must have been spinning as they listened to Jesus' words. Yet, He did not send them out alone.



Jesus told the disciples that great power was going to come upon them in the form of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would give them power to be God’s witness in their neighborhood, the surrounding towns, and the far reaches of the globe. Isn’t that an awesome promise? Don’t you want that kind of power?

The Bible tells us that when the Holy Spirit came on them, they did amazing things! They spoke in foreign languages so that those from other countries and territories could understand them (Acts 2:1-8). The Apostle Peter preached a sermon and 3,000 people gave their lives to God (Acts 2:14-42).

Acts 8:12 says: “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.” Get the picture? The disciples had remained true to God’s message. They preached the good news of the kingdom and they talked about Jesus! It really doesn’t get any better than that for a Christian. That’s what we’re about. That’s what we are commanded to do. It is in doing this that we please God most.

## Appeal

We’ve come to the end of this very challenging message. Jesus is calling each of us to “get in the game,” step on the field, make our mark. How do we do it? By simply accepting God’s call to share the Great Commission.

The appeal this evening will be a bit different. I won’t ask you to come to the front or raise your hand. Tonight I would like everyone to quickly form into groups of two or three. Once you have done that, here is your task.



4. What parts of the great commission should be performed by different people in the church-pastors, elders, Bible workers, members, etc.? Are there any roles that are reserved for certain people and not others?

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**The early adolescence (11-14) years can be an incredibly challenging life stage. Small groups can offer safety and a place of belonging for youth as they encounter life change together. Check out the small group covenant on page 67.**

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## DAY 7:

# CAUGHT IN BETWEEN



### Main Text

“And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true’”  
**(Revelation 21:15).**

*[NOTE TO PRESENTER: This message captures the tension between the kingdom of God as it is experienced on earth and the kingdom of God that will come in full when Jesus Christ returns to take His people home. While we can live in the kingdom now by accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord of our lives, we only need to look around to see that all is not perfect in our world. This is one of the tensions which we must live with before Jesus returns.]*

*There is a longing in the heart There is a hunger in the soul  
A thirst that can't be satisfied*

*And deep inside you know You long for something that is much more  
Than everything that's in your world*

*Life is a dream and heaven's reality And I'm caught in between  
I know it seems this world has everything It's nothing more than a dream*

*'Cause life is a dream and heaven's reality and if we just hold on  
Then we will wake up to the face of God*

Those are the lyrics to a once-famous gospel song from the 1990s. Chances are that you weren't born yet when that song came out. The lyrics, though, still ring with truth. The songwriter is trying to get the listeners to focus on a different reality than the one we see on earth. Most people tend to think that what's real is only what they can see, touch, taste, feel, or hear. But that's not entirely true. Heaven is more real than anything on earth, yet few people live like it.







So, the kingdom of God can mean three different things depending on which verse one is looking at. There are kingdom blessings we can experience now, such as knowing Jesus Christ (John 17:3), close fellowship with Christ (John 15), and peace that passes all understanding (John 14:27). So while Jesus spoke His parables about the kingdom, He communicated that the kingdom of God would not be present in its fullness and perfection.

### **Are We There Yet? No!**

Last year, several grizzly stories made the news, as all grizzly stories seem to do. An angry husband killed his wife and then posted pictures of his crime on Facebook. A few weeks earlier, one woman was arrested for sexually molesting babies entrusted to her at a daycare. A few months before that, YouTube videos of people in Syria dying from a poisoned gas attack saddened many around the world. I could go on and on, but you get the point. We live in a really, really sick world.

Friends, if this is what the kingdom of God looks like in its fullness and perfection, then count me out. I want no part of it. What about you?

Jesus' own words seem to make the case better than we ever could. How can some claim that the kingdom of God is here in its fullness when Matthew 13:36-43 makes clear that evil doers will not be removed until Jesus returns? Verse 43 says, "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." Notice, the righteous don't shine forth until God has removed all sin.

Of this blessed day, Ellen G. White wrote this: "Fellow pilgrim, we are still amid the shadows and turmoil of

earthly activities; but soon our Saviour is to appear to bring deliverance and rest. Let us by faith behold the blessed hereafter as pictured by the hand of God. He who died for the sins of the world is opening wide the gates of Paradise to all who believe on Him. Soon the battle will have been fought, the victory won. Soon we shall see Him in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. And in His presence the trials and sufferings of this life will seem as nothingness. The former things ‘shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 731-732).

## Appeal

My friends, don't you long for the day when Jesus will open the gates of paradise to you and me? Won't it be wonderful to leave earth behind forever to spend eternity with God in the earth made new?

*[Tell the following story in your own words.]*

*On November 3, 2013, the Associated Press carried the story of Asher Vongtau, a 19-year-old student of New York University who somehow found himself stuck between a rock and a hard place. It was not clear at the time how long he had been there, but he certainly was desperate to get out.*

*So where exactly was Mr. Vongtau? He was wedged between a 17-story high-rise dormitory and a concrete parking garage. No one knows for sure — except Mr. Vongtau, of course — just how he got there. Thankfully, someone heard his cries for help and called authorities. Police came and, after about ninety minutes, they freed the trapped student by breaking through one of the concrete walls.*

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We may not be caught between two concrete buildings, but perhaps there are moments you feel trapped between the harsh realities of living on earth and the unfulfilled joys of living with Jesus in the kingdom of Heaven. The prophet John got a vision of Heaven and this is what He wrote:

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:1-4).

Are we there yet? Unfortunately, the answer is no. Now is time for us to cry out to God, to seek His face, to make all things right with Him so that we can be ready when He returns to take us to His kingdom. That kingdom will be perfect in every way.

So, are you going? Are you sure that you’re ready to go? If you want to tell God today, “I want to let everyone know that you are my God,” please raise your hand. Now, if you would like to be baptized into God’s great kingdom, please raise your hand.

*[Note to Presenter: Don’t rush the appeal here. Take time to give everyone a chance to join Jesus in His glorious kingdom. Close with prayer, thanking God for being with us while we await His soon return.]*



## DAY 8:

# A Final Warning



## Main Text

The Bible says, "And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters'"

**(Revelation 14:6, 7, NASB).**

*[NOTE TO PRESENTER: Well, we have come to the final day of our Week of Prayer focusing on the kingdom of God. This message is a solemn one because it gets to the very core of what the kingdom is all about and challenges us to deliver God's final warning to the world. The good news of salvation is the final message that we must take to the world before Jesus comes (Matthew 24:14). This calling is both solemn, yet exciting, because we get to participate in scenes of God's rescue plan for fallen humanity.]*

**H**ello, everyone! We have come to the last day of our Junior Youth Week of Prayer. God has taught us many things about His kingdom this week. We learned that Jesus preached tirelessly about it. We learned that He gave the disciples power to deliver the message of the kingdom, while performing some of the same miracles that He performed. We learned that we are called to enlist with God in the work of spreading the gospel. Today we will see that the call to spread the good news of salvation is the last warning that will be given to men and women, boys and girls. Therefore, we must take our responsibility very seriously. But before I begin, please allow me to share the following story with you.









## God's Mercy

God is so merciful that He will not destroy anyone until they have had an opportunity to respond to His call. Consider this statement by Ellen G. White about the seriousness of God's final warning to the world:

"But God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins and "receive not of her plagues." Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard: 'Come out of her, My people.' These announcements, uniting with the third angel's message, constitute the final warning to be given to the inhabitants of the earth" (*The Great Controversy*, p.604).

You and me, we are God's mouthpieces on earth. We are called to deliver God's final warning to a perishing world. While we must tell our friends about the fearful destruction ahead, this is not the heart of our end-time warning. The heart of our message is Jesus Christ. We must urge everyone we know to accept Him, give their lives to Him, and worship Him. Now is the time to encourage all people to put their faith in Jesus and trust Him to transform them and get them ready for His soon return.

## Appeal

Whether we know it or not, God wants to save us, and He wants to save others through us. If the people are not watching us because we have stopped sharing the love of Jesus with them, then shame on us. We have a world to win.

**The appeal today is a simple one. It is a simple call to accept and deliver God's final message.**

If you accept the responsibility to live the gospel you know and tell others about the Jesus who saved you, then please join me here so we can consecrate our lives to God in prayer.

*[Close with a simple prayer, asking God to empower us to deliver His last message of love to the world.]*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Does God use fear to get people to change their behavior? Can you give an example for or against based on your answer?
2. How do you feel when someone rejects your offers of help? How are we to take the rejections that are sure to come when we begin to share our faith? (See Matthew 10:14.)
3. Look up the meaning of "remnant" in the dictionary. What do you think it means to be a part of God's remnant church? Could the disciples be considered a type of remnant group?
4. Can we effectively share a message that we do not obey and live? Explain.

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# OUR SMALL GROUP COVENANT

*I agree that this group exists as a safe place for me to be myself, ask questions about my faith, learn to love others, and receive support and encouragement in my walk with God.*

## **We agree to:**

1. Love each other.
2. Be in harmony with one another.
3. Speak the truth in love.
4. Welcome and accept each person.
5. Be kind to each other.
6. Not judge each other.
7. Pray for one another.
8. Attend each small group meetings when we can.
9. Not hate one another.
10. Be respectful of everyone's opinion (there are no dumb questions).
11. Encourage and build up each other.
12. Keep my advice to the minimum.
13. Forgive one another.
14. Not grumble against each other.
15. Not give up meeting together.
16. Not speak about group members when they are not present.

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PRINT NAME

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

"By this all men will know that you are my (Christ's) disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34, 35)

**On Sabbath, March 15, 2014**, youth will hear one less sermon in the morning. **THEY will be the sermon.** They will step out of the building to be the Church and reach out in the name of Jesus.

**There will be six elements to Global Youth Day:**

1. Young people from local churches, regions, or Conferences/Missions will meet for a time of consecration before spending the best part of Sabbath reaching out in local communities.
2. They will be involved in Sabbath friendly acts of kindness that will have been chosen and planned for in advance.
3. To provide a focus for the day after their diverse acts of kindness, youths around the world will donate blood as the symbol of the ultimate life-saving act of compassion.
4. To complete the day's activities, young people will congregate in their local churches, regions, or Conferences/Missions for a time of worship and sharing of experiences to mark the beginning of the Week of Prayer, which is based on Mission & Service.
5. Youths around the world will be connected through technology and live coverage as stories light up the world progressively through the different time zones.
6. A specially designed T-shirt will provide identification with the global initiative.

The Global Youth Day will be an annual event with a different emphasis each year.

**The Global Youth Day will reposition youth at the center of the Church's life and Mission. It has the potential of being the dawn of youth ministry's finest hour.**



**BE THE SERMON**  
**MARCH 15 / 2014**

**8 MILLION**  
**ADVENTIST YOUTH**  
**MOBILIZED**  
**ON THE STREETS**  
**WORLDWIDE**

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