

PARTICIPANT NOTES

Learn to see differently, so we can live differently

SESSION ONE — PART 2

KINGDOM vs EMPIRE

Learn to Recognise Empire

Tuesday 21 July

KEY QUESTION

Every day, two kingdoms compete for our allegiance. How do we recognise them?

1. Kingdom Journal Conversation

Share with three or four people near you whatever you feel comfortable sharing from your Kingdom Journal over the last two weeks. You don't need to answer every question.

- Where did you notice empire?
- Where did you glimpse God's Kingdom?
- What surprised you?
- What did the Holy Spirit draw your attention to?

What stood out from your group's conversation?

2. Practising Discernment: Kingdom or Empire?

Sort these words into three columns: Kingdom / Empire / Not sure... or it depends. Some feel obvious; others don't. The real question is sometimes how they are being understood, how they are being used, and whose kingdom they are serving.

WORD BANK

Control · Mercy · Competition · Hospitality · Fear · Abundance · Justice · Success · Service · Scarcity · Diversity · Power · Forgiveness · Violence · Status · Stewardship

Kingdom	Empire	Not sure / depends

Kingdom	Empire	Not sure / depends

Which word was hardest to place, and why? Which values do you think our culture rewards most — and which does Jesus form in us?

WORTH REMEMBERING

Leaders shaped by empire tend to become self-centred, protective, controlling and status-conscious — driven by fear, scarcity and competition. They may use Kingdom language while their instincts remain imperial. Discernment matters, because empire isn't only "out there" — it can take root in our leadership, our churches, our teams, and our own hearts.

3. The Kingdom Lost: When Communion Breaks

"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis 2:16–17)

Genesis 3 isn't really about fruit — it's about relationship, trust, and who gets to define reality. The serpent's voice sowed doubt, suggesting that God was withholding, controlling or denying something we were entitled to. Rather than trust God, we trusted our own judgement instead — a grasp for autonomy, control and self-definition rather than communion.

The consequences spread outward immediately: shame, blame, and a fractured relationship between man and woman that had once been marked by ease, mutuality and shared stewardship.

Your notes / reflections

4. What Changed? How Empire Takes Root

Dominion was never meant to mean domination — it meant being entrusted with responsibility, to steward creation and represent God's character. Once communion with God breaks, dominion curdles into domination, and the fracture spreads like an infection through the opening chapters of Genesis:

Genesis chapter	What it reveals
Genesis 3	The fracture — trust breaks down, autonomy replaces communion.
Genesis 4	The violence — Cain murders his brother Abel.
Genesis 6	The corruption — evil fills the earth, leading to the flood.
Genesis 11	The empire — Babel, humanity building its own name.

Genesis 1 begins with humanity bearing God's image; Genesis 11 ends with humanity building its own image, its own name. That is the direction of empire — and empire begins long before Egypt, Babylon or Rome. It begins in the human heart, whenever we stop trusting God, start blaming others, and place ourselves at the centre of the story.

But this isn't the end of the story. Genesis 12 begins with a promise: blessing starts to replace curse. God refuses to abandon His Kingdom project.

Your notes / reflections

5. Has Empire Won? A Glimpse of New Creation

The Bible unfolds in three great movements — a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. The table below traces that story from Genesis 1–2 through to Revelation 20.

EXERCISE — REVELATION 21:1–5 AND 22:1–5

As these passages are read aloud, listen for what has disappeared, what has been restored, and what has become better than before — then complete the End column below.

BEGINNING (Gen 1–2)	IN-BETWEEN (Gen 3–Rev 20)	END (Rev 21–22)
Creation of the heavens and the earth	Sin, death and oppression enter	
Seas created and ordered	Chaos and disorder threaten creation	
No human death	Death pervades human existence	
No pain or tears	Pain, suffering and grief	
Sun and moon govern creation	Creation continues under their light	
Darkness restrained	Spiritual darkness continues	
River of life with one Tree of Life	God's presence glimpsed through tabernacle and temple	
No curse	Humanity lives under the curse	
No sin	Sin corrupts every aspect of life	
God's direct rule	God's rule revealed through covenant, temple and Christ	
Humanity bears God's image and co-rules	God's image distorted but gradually restored	
Male and female co-rule	Hierarchy and domination distort relationships	
Unity in diversity	Conformity and assimilation	

The Bible doesn't simply end where it began. Revelation doesn't picture a return to the garden, but a garden-city — New Creation. The Tree of Life and the river remain, but everything is bigger, richer, more beautiful: the nations are healed, there is no curse, no death, no night, because God's presence fills everything. What was lost in Eden is not merely recovered — it is transformed, completed, fulfilled.

Like Genesis 1, Revelation is saturated with sevens — seven churches, seals, trumpets, bowls, and the seven spirits before the throne — the mathematical signature of a Kingdom moving towards completion:

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15)

Your notes / reflections

6. Practising Allegiance: Your Kingdom Come

Continue the Kingdom Journal, adding one simple practice: whenever you notice empire at work — in the news, your workplace, your relationships or your own heart — pause, and simply pray, “Your Kingdom come.” And whenever you glimpse God’s Kingdom — a moment of kindness, an act of courage, a word of forgiveness, a generous act — pause again and say, “Thank You, Lord.”

Formation is not simply learning more information; it's allowing the Holy Spirit to reshape the way we see and respond.

CLOSING PRAYER FOCUS

Holy Spirit... show me where empire has shaped the way I think, speak, lead and live — and show me where Your Kingdom is inviting me to live differently.

Journal space — carry forward to next session (11 August)
