

# Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

## Lesson 24

### *God's Kingdom, Not Problem Centered - But Christ Centered*

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*Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV) - Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Do you want the power of God to be loosed in your life? Or, do you want to keep struggling day after day with your problems, trying to solve them yourself with your own power and strength? From the Kingdom of God perspective, the problems we are faced with in life do not have to be problems any longer. Our problems can become divine *opportunities* for God to do a work in us. Yet, many people will miss their opportunity, because they will only see the problems in their life; not how God plans to utilize their problems to bring about a demonstration of His glory and power on earth.

While “*positive thinking*” folks try to make people think that the power is within them to work out their own problems, that is not true. The power of God’s Kingdom is not about self-power. It is not based on self-esteem trends, which push the idea, “If anything good is going to happen in your life, you are the one who has to make it happen!” No, we are not to focus on our ourselves, and our own strength. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to pursue His leadership and draw strength from Him. Jesus’ ministry on earth was kingdom centered in every way. He demonstrated the quality of life in the kingdom, in all He said and did.

How can this quality be accomplished in our life? What is the key to staying centered on God and his Kingdom, rather than on our problems and our solutions? It is really quite simple. The meek, in humility, come to God. As Christians we stand out as the humble ones of the earth. When problems come, we are not ashamed to admit, “I need

God!” People in the world who can’t confess their need of God, will miss out on the power of God’s Kingdom. But, those who can confess Jesus as Lord know that this is the very power that God wants to be loosed into this present world.

Following His pronouncement of the Beatitudes, Jesus described in detail the type of influence that should literally radiate from those who live by this inward power. “Salt” and “light” are words that describe what we are supposed to be in relationship to our world.

*Matthew 5:16 (KJV) - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Our Father in Heaven will be given the glory for every work we allow Jesus to perform through us. My hope does not come from faith in myself. It is not feeling good about me that is important. It is feeling good about what Christ has done, “Christ in me, the hope of glory!” (Colossians 1:27) When we are centered on Christ we have a whole different attitude about life. When a problem comes up, we don’t fall apart or become overwhelmed by it. We don’t cry out, “I can’t take it anymore...this is more than I can handle!” What do we do? We, with humility, patience and long-suffering look to Christ for solutions.

By looking at things from a kingdom of God perspective we can say with confidence, “This is just another opportunity to touch heaven and to rely on the grace and mercy of God. It is another opportunity to let the Word of God work in my life to guide me in the right direction.” This guidance comes through *reflective* study of the written Word, as well as becoming *actively* involved in the solutions the Holy Spirit brings as answers to our problems.

It is so important that we play an *active* role in this! It is not God's responsibility to remove all our problems. We need to be in partnership with God in bringing to pass the solutions to our problems. We should not go to God and simply dump all our problems on him, expecting him to instantly remove them because of a quick prayer, while we go merrily on our way. That is to say, we are not to think of God as the city dump, where we drive up, unload our trash, and drive off with a clean truck! There are consequences to our actions, so we shouldn't be asking God to reward us for bad behavior. Happiness in God's Kingdom doesn't come about by selfishly asking God to take all the garbage we don't want to deal with, off of our hands. That is not how life in God's Kingdom works.

Jesus does not tell us, "Come and dump on me". He tells us, instead, "Come and *learn* from me"!

*Matthew 11:28,29 (NIV) - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened...Take my yoke upon you and learn from me..."*

How are we going to live our life? Will we focus our time and effort on our problems, or on Christ and the solutions He offers us? Can we in humility admit we need God's help? If we can admit we need God's help, will we be able to sit still long enough to learn about the mysteries of life in God's Kingdom? If we can truly come to Jesus for the right reason, to reconcile (reestablish a close relationship with him), we will want to focus on the following questions: What can I learn about God *and* myself from the valuable lessons Jesus wants to teach me? How will the quality of my life improve if I patiently follow his wisdom and guidance?

There are no short cuts. It is through intimate fellowship and the lessons Jesus teaches us, that we will find the answers we've been seeking. It is when we are weary and burdened down, that we are in a unique position to come to Jesus to learn spiritual truths and find rest for our souls.

**The bottom line:** Life in God's Kingdom is about focus. We can focus on our weakness (our problems), or we can focus on our strength - Jesus Christ! Isaiah sums it up beautifully!

*Isaiah 40:28-31 (NIV) - Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*



Note: This lesson was inspired by the glory of the Lord at work in the lives of God's faithful ones. Pastor Loren Covarrubias outline notes on "Kingdom in Conflict" was especially helpful. Praise God for His excellent power at work in all his children.

#### **Questions for Personal or Group Study:**

1. How can our problems be turned into divine opportunities for God?
2. What is the key to staying centered on God and his Kingdom rather than on our problems?
3. How is the power of positive thinking different from the power of kingdom thinking?
4. What "role" are we to play if we want to learn about the mysteries of life in God's Kingdom?
5. What two words in the lesson, describe what Jesus wants His followers to be in relationship to the world?
6. How is happiness in God's Kingdom attained? What should we avoid to insure this happiness?
7. What attribute of kingdom living, keeps us from falling apart when problems come up?
8. What is the right reason to come to Jesus? What is the main reason we don't come to him for help?
9. Why do Christians stand out as the humble ones of the earth? Can you relate to the power that is available to the humble?