

KINGDOM MATH

Overview Statement:

God invites us to give Him whatever is already in our hands, no matter how small it is, so that we have the privilege of participating with Him in extending His Kingdom. God supernaturally uses our sacrificial obedience and multiplies what we entrust to Him. Scripture reveals over and over, God's way sets us free from depending on outside resources for growth and development.

Main Ideas:

1. God requires all believers to invest what they have for Kingdom purposes. Both those with little and those with much have something to give.
2. God multiplies our gifts given in loving obedience even when we don't see the multiplication.
3. The greater the sacrifice, the greater the multiplication.
4. God is honored and others are blessed through our sacrificial, loving and obedient giving.
5. The consequences of not giving what we have to God are drastic. It is very dangerous to hold on to what we have instead of investing it in the Kingdom.

Outcomes:

1. Now:
 - a. To grasp and express the main ideas of the lesson in their own words.
 - b. To plan and carry out one new step in response to a main idea of this lesson sacrificially and obediently investing what we have in order to advance God's Kingdom.
2. Beyond:
 - a. To identify the various resources God has already provided, commit to invest those resources to serve others, and recognize that God multiplies their giving.
 - b. To work as leaders to teach, challenge and encourage other believers to obediently and sacrificially give what they already have in order to serve others.

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Participant Outline

I. Review

II. Introduction

II. Key Verse - Isaiah 40:29

- A. What are some of your thoughts on the meaning of this passage?

- B. Can you put this passage into a math formula?

III. Supporting Verses and Discovery Questions

- A. A Story from the Lake - John 6:1-14; Matthew 14:21
 - 1. Could Jesus have fed the crowd in another way? How?

 - 2. Then why did Jesus “pick” on a boy who only had enough lunch for himself?

 - 3. Keep this question in mind as we move forward in the lesson.

B. A Famine Story - *I Kings 17:7-16; 18:1*

1. Could God have fed Elijah in another way? How?
2. Then why do you think God fed Elijah by asking a very needy widow to give all she had to feed the prophet?
3. Keep this question in mind as we move forward.

C. A Temple Story - *Mark 12:41 -44*

1. Do you think Jesus knew how needy this widow was and that she had only two small coins?
2. Then why didn't Jesus at least stop her and invite her to use her small coins to at least get something to eat?
3. Do you think that the widow literally gave more than the rich who gave that day? How?

Let's do the formula and find out.

1. Did Jesus make an exception for the poor members of the Kingdom, in terms of their responsibility to give some of their resources for Kingdom purposes?
2. What do the poor need, in order to be obedient to Jesus' command to love their neighbor?
3. As the poor share what they have, what attitudes are necessary?

4. Are there any circumstances in which the poor have “too little” or something “too insignificant” to give to God?
5. What evidence is there that God blesses the giving of the poor?
6. When God blesses the gifts of the poor that are given in faith, does He bless by “addition” or “multiplication?”
7. Do those who give to God always see or experience personal blessing in this life?
8. Jesus said this woman gave “more” than all the others, what did He mean?

D. A Common Kingdom Formula

E. A Very, Very Sad Story - *Matthew 25:14-30*

1. Considering this passage, what do you think is the consequence for the poor if they use poverty as a reason not to obey Jesus’ command to love their neighbor? What is the consequence for anyone who does not love his/her neighbor, regardless of their reason?
2. How do the different servants spell “FAITH”?

IV. Reinforcement

V. Application Plan

- A. Decide to give something or to serve sacrificially, based on:
- Love for God
 - Faith
 - Obedience / Sacrificial giving
- B. Write the decision:
- C. Application Report (Be prepared to report at the beginning of the next class session.)

KINGDOM MATHEMATICS

Narrative

The truth that God turns our little into much is powerful—if the truth is internalized.

A group of young men were ministering to street people in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Two of their leaders had attended one of our conferences, where they heard that God multiplies the willing sacrifices of His children. At the time of the conference, they were befriending street boys. Only two years later, they had a sophisticated organization with forty staff and volunteers and strategies that ranged from keeping youth off the street to rehabilitating prostitutes. When asked how this came about, they replied, “Kingdom Mathematics!” They had grown up in a solid Christian church, but their culture believed that significant progress against poverty can only be initiated with outside resources. They had heard biblical stories of God’s power to multiply resources, but had found it difficult to internalize the truth—until now.

A mentality of dependence imprisons much of the church in the developing world today, but we have seen God use the truths of this message to help free many church leaders from the bondage of dependency. Similarly, an attitude that our simple acts of sacrificial service are insufficient to make a lasting difference in broken communities paralyzes the church in the developed world. Yet, an understanding of Kingdom Math has encouraged even the smallest or poorest churches to obediently do what may seem impossible. God wants to use the church as a channel through which He can release His transforming power, but He cannot do that when the church is relying on sources other than God. Yes, God may use “outside” resources—but when the church looks to something other than God as the source for healing, either in thought or in practice, it moves perilously close to worship of the creation rather than the Creator. In a sense, looking to the outside rather than to God is unintentional idolatry.

Kingdom Mathematics helped the Ethiopian youth and their leaders. What is it? Let’s look at familiar biblical stories to learn how God miraculously brings transformation.

God’s Strength

The first passage we will look at is Isaiah 40:29. It reads, “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.” Here is what that scripture could look like as a Kingdom mathematical equation:

$$\text{Our weakness} \times \text{God} = \text{Strength}$$

The message of Kingdom Mathematics is summed up in this brief passage. When we give our weakness to God, He turns it into strength. The rest of the passage tells us, “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 as eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:30-31). This “turning” is not an ordinary transformation. It is miraculous. Kingdom Mathematics is not a philosophy that says, “If you believe enough in yourselves, or in the power of positive thinking, you can change your circumstances.” It begins with an acknowledgement that, in and of ourselves, we are weak and insufficient. Even youths grow tired and young men stumble. When we are ready to admit our weakness, we are in a position to come to God and offer our weakness. It is then that He performs the miracle of Kingdom Mathematics and transforms our limitations into His power.

Many biblical stories can be translated into Kingdom mathematical equations, but we will consider just four. At the end of each story, we will develop an equation. At the conclusion of the stories, we will discover truths to help free us from dependency and paralysis.

A Story from the Lake

Here is the first dramatized story, taken from John 6:1-14 and Matthew 14:13-21. A ten-year-old boy named Barak had heard that a famous teacher was speaking to the people at the lake. He pleaded with his mother to be allowed go. She finally relented and packed a lunch of five bread rolls and two baked fish in a napkin. When Barak reached the lake, he worked his way through the crowd until he was right in front. Barak did not understand everything, but he was drawn to the teacher in an unusual way. When he became hungry, Barak carefully opened up the lunch. At the same time, one of the teacher's disciples suggested that the teacher should send the people away to get something to eat. But the teacher said, "They don't need to go away. You give them something to eat!" One disciple, Andrew, had seen Barak's lunch. Andrew said, "Jesus, all we have here is five rolls and two little fish." Jesus said, "Bring them to me." I wonder what was going through Barak's mind—but he gave up his lunch to Jesus, who gave thanks and then began to break the bread and distribute it to the crowd. Imagine Barak telling his mother later, "The teacher took my lunch and broke it and fed all those people—with twelve baskets left over!"

How would you have felt if you had been Barak? What if Jesus had asked you for all you had to eat? Couldn't Jesus have fed the crowd in some other way? He could have, but He didn't. Instead, He asked a young boy to give all he had. Here is a possible equation, showing a multiplication of at least 5,000 times!

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Boy} \\ + \text{5 loaves and 2 fish} \\ \hline \text{x Jesus} \\ \hline = \text{Food for 5,000 men} \\ + \text{Food for women and children} \\ + \text{12 left over baskets} \end{array}$$

A Famine Story

Here is a second story, taken from I Kings 17 – 18:1. Elijah had called for a famine as punishment for unrighteousness in Israel. The famine had lasted over three years, and King Ahab was pursuing Elijah. God sent Elijah to hide near a stream and provided him with food, using ravens. When the stream dried up, God sent Elijah to a distant city. He was very thirsty and hungry when he reached the city and asked a woman for help, requesting first a jar of water and then something to eat. The woman was so poor, she brought the water and then said, "I only have flour and oil for one last meal for myself and my son." Elijah assured her that God would provide. In faith, the woman took her remaining flour and oil and fed Elijah. Miraculously, flour and oil remained in the jars—enough to feed the woman, her son, Elijah, and others until the famine ended. Making some assumptions, here is a possible equation, again showing a multiplication of more than 6,000 times!

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Widow} \\ + \text{1 cake} \\ \hline \text{x God} \\ \hline = \text{1 cakes (meal) per day} \\ \text{x 3 people (She, her son and Elijah)} \\ \text{x 2 meals/day} \\ \text{x 365 days} \\ \hline \text{x 2.5 years of famine} \\ \hline = \text{5,475 cakes (meals)} \end{array}$$

Even more amazing than the multiplication is the way that God fed the servant. Couldn't God have fed Elijah some other way? Yes, but He turned to a widow who had only enough for herself and her son.

A Temple Story

Here is a third story, taken from Mark12:41-44. Jesus was in the temple, observing people depositing their offerings. The rich stood tall and made a show of depositing their gifts. A poor widow tried to avoid notice as she made a deposit of two tiny coins—this was everything she had. Jesus observed her. He could have intervened, telling her that God did not need her small offering. He did not intervene, or even talk with the widow. However, He did say, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all of the others” (Mark12:43). Of course, she gave proportionally more than the rich gave because she gave all she had. She also literally gave more than the rich, as seen in this possible equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Widow} \\ + \text{ 2 coins} \\ \underline{\text{x Jesus}} \\ = \text{ 2,000 years of inspiration to give sacrificially} \end{array}$$

How many millions of times has the widow’s gift been multiplied in 2,000 years? Christians throughout generations have given sacrificially because of her example. Other than the story of the Cross, this may be the greatest story of multiplication in all of Scripture!

These three stories can be combined in one overall Kingdom equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{All people (even the poor)} \\ + \text{ Faith in God} \\ + \text{ Sacrificial giving} \\ + \text{ Giving when asked} \\ \underline{\text{x God}} \\ = \text{ Great multiplication by God} \\ + \text{ Blessing to others} \\ + \text{ God is praised} \\ + \text{ Personal blessing (sometimes)} \end{array}$$

This is consistent with the life of Jesus. He had few worldly goods. He said, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has no place to lay his head” (John 8:20). Yet, He made the greatest sacrifice anyone has ever made—His life. His sacrifice has brought eternal blessing for 2,000 years for all who ask and believe bringing great glory to God.

A Very, Very Sad Story

Here is one last story—without a happy ending. Jesus told this parable, recorded in Matthew 25:14-30, to illustrate His Kingdom. A wealthy man called his three servants to give instructions before he left on a long trip. He entrusted part of his resources to each, expecting a profit on his return. The servants were entrusted with five, three and one talents, respectively. When the wealthy man returned, he asked the servants to report their results. The servants entrusted with five and two talents reported acceptable profits and were invited to become members of the man’s household. The servant entrusted with one talent had to admit that his fear caused him to protect the little that he had by burying it rather than risking it in the market. The servant was not only rebuked by the master but was also ejected from the household. Couldn’t the master have shown the “poor” servant a little mercy? Did He have to be so harsh? Consider this possible equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Servant} \\ + \text{ 1 Talent} \\ \underline{\text{x 0 (nothing)}} \\ = \text{ 0} \\ + \text{ Servant thrown into darkness} \end{array}$$

Lessons for All Christians and Local Churches

These four stories have important lessons for all Christians, but especially for those who believe that what they have is just enough for themselves. What are the lessons?

All people, regardless of their material possessions or position in life, are called to give God what they have. There are no exceptions – not even for the poor. There are no circumstances in which what we have is “too little” or “too insignificant” to be used by God. We need to give to God when He asks us. Our current circumstances are not an excuse. Wherever we are, whatever we are, we need to give when God asks. Our motive for giving should be faith in and love for God – not material gain. Gain and provision may come, but our giving should never be based on the expectation of blessing.

In all these stories, it was God who requested sacrifice. Sacrificial giving in obedience to God leads to multiplication. We cannot obediently give to God without multiplication: the greater the sacrifice, the greater the increase. It is His love that calls for sacrifice. Loving and obedient sacrifice releases the power of His Kingdom, both for the heroes of these stories—and for us. God loves us and wants us to be apart of what He is doing on the earth. He doesn't want us to do it on our own and He has chosen not to do it on His own. God is looking for people who will do their part AND fully depend on Him to bring hope and life to a broken world. The call to sacrifice is indeed from a God who loves us—from a God who is love.

This last lesson is difficult. If we do not invest what God has entrusted to us, we not only lose it, but risk being thrown out of the Master's household. Disobedience is dangerous.

What can these stories teach our local churches—especially those with few material or financial resources? Here are some implications. We are not powerless. God will take what is given in loving obedience and multiply it to glorify Himself—and extend His Kingdom. Secondly, it is dangerous for the Church to hold on to what it has for its own benefit. Sacrificial giving of church resources to demonstrate God's compassion for others' needs will impact the congregation and people outside the Kingdom. Kingdom Mathematics teaches people to give. To not teach and encourage Christians to do this is to rob them of the blessings God wants to provide. The Church also should mirror the sacrificial giving of its people.

Finally, we should not be afraid. Two servants who were given five and two talents spelled faith “R-I-S-K,” while the servant with only one talent spelled faith very differently “F-E-A-R.” The Church must be courageous in its expression of God's love. Let us risk for the Kingdom, remembering that what we risk is not our own, but it is a talent that has been entrusted to us. God gives us all we need to honor Him. Scripture tells us: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:3).

There is hope. It is not blind hope. It is hope in the certainty that God has a plan and He honors the faithfulness of His children multiplying their obedient and loving sacrifices. This is God's way—this is Kingdom Mathematics.

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Suggested Resources:

Harvest Website: www.harvestfoundation.org. Sections: Materials – LTDP II or LCMT Part 2

Disciple Nations Alliance online course: www.disciplenations.org/resources/course. Section: Wholistic Ministry

If Jesus Were Mayor, Bob Moffitt and Karla Tesch.