

When Jesus is King of Your Castle

Matthew 6:33

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We begin a miniseries today within the overall series on the kingdom of God. We've entitled it *Creating a Kingdom Culture at Home*. Why? **The home is ground zero for king and kingdom allegiances. The simple fact that the home is ground zero.**

We are gravely mistaken when we think national politics or school boards are where the real battle takes place. Satan always shops local. The home represents two of God's most treasured created institutions: marriage and family. Satan's first temptation was against marriage by tempting Eve to act independent of Adam. He also targeted Adam through his marriage. Marital and family relationships are shaped by a culture and an allegiance to King Jesus or a hundred rebels who vie for the allegiance of the family, the marriage, the children, and the home. Who's king in your house, really?

From where do most of the problems we deal with pastorally come? The home. Where are the most severe human anguishes felt? The home. Where do sin and sinful attitudes have their greatest effect? The home. This is not to say that the home is the kingdom of God or the church or the most important thing. It is to say that the culture of our homes is a clear indication of who has our allegiance. Which kingdom we truly serve. Who really is our king.

Here's the reality. The kingdom of God brings blessing. It brings human flourishing. There is no better place in the world than wherever King Jesus is worshiped and served. The counterpart is also true. The worst and most painful place in the whole world is wherever self, or Satan, or sin are on the throne. When they rule a home, that home is in misery and chaos.

Therefore, one of the most loving pastoral kindnesses we can offer is to teach and model as best we can what a kingdom family looks like, acts like, and lives like. To pray over our homes, *thy Kingdom come and thy will be done*. What does it look like when that prayer is answered? I fear too many of us look at our home and family relationships and think, *this is the way it is and this is the way I grew up and this is the way families are*, and we miss that God's purpose is to bring the glory of his Son's kingdom right into your living room, into your kitchen, into your bedroom—every part of your home in a glad surrender to the Kingship of Jesus. What's that like?

Kingdom Culture Starts in the Heart

Before you think this is about hanging verses on the wall of your house, I want everybody to hear this clearly—kingdom culture starts in the heart. **You cannot bring the kingdom to your home until you have brought the King into your heart.** He has to rule and reign here (your heart) before there will be any lasting submission to him in a home or a marriage or a family. Sure, you can try Christian principles for a while but eventually the real king of your heart is revealed.

Is he King of your heart? What might the condition of your home indicate about the condition of your heart?

Remember the kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God through Jesus. It is a redemptive reign as a sinner pledges allegiance to Jesus as his king and bows his life before Jesus as Savior and Lord. It is a saving surrender. A transfer of allegiance and citizenship. From what?

From the kingdom of Satan and the kingdoms of sin and selfishness which naturally rule our hearts and homes and marriages and families. We are born citizens of Satan's kingdom and without divine intervention live allegiant to that kingdom our whole lives. Who suffers? We do. Homes where the real worship is self will fall far short of the glory God intended in the home. Marriages between two self-worshippers fall far short of the glory God intended for marriage. What do we need?

We need a new and better king over that home. A new king over that marriage. A renewed commitment to glorify the King by submitting to him. That King is Jesus. He has made this change possible by the power of salvation in the human heart.

"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son." (Colossians 1:13 ESV)

Jesus changes home culture by changing heart culture

We want to guide our homes by God's kingdom culture. Satan's culture is obvious; it is immoral, self-obsessed, divisive, arrogant, hateful, and hardens human hearts against family members. When a home's culture is like that you know who is in control there.

I want you to evaluate your home, whether you are single or married, have children in the home or it's just you and Beethoven your dog. Every home has a culture to it. A vibe. An ethos. A Christian home should be an outpost of kingdom culture in a broader culture that is somewhere between indifferent and hostile to those values. As Jesus said, *"People loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil."* (John 3:19) As the puritan Isaac Ambrose said, we are "erecting and establishing Christ's glorious kingdom in their house."¹

How does heart culture change home culture? Jesus creates a new culture of the heart which changes the culture of the home one family member at a time. Heart culture changes home culture.

What are the cultural indicators of Jesus as King of a home? By home I don't mean walls and a roof; I mean the relationships and lifestyle and priorities of the people in the home.

Cultural Indicators That Jesus is King of Your Castle

His kingdom is the first priority

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33)

This key verse in Matthew summarizes the whole Christian home culture well. There is a higher purpose to the family than just the family itself. Too many families fail on this point when they elevate the purpose of the family to be the family or the success of the family. We will talk about this more in a marriage message in a few weeks. Marriages fail when the

¹ Isaac Ambrose as quoted by Joel Beeke in *Living for God's glory*, p. 333.

marriage is the first priority of the marriage. No marriage can sustain that high of an expectation and it devastates the couple when the marriage fails to deliver. Family is the same. Make your family the purpose of your family and it can only deeply disappoint. God designed family to be deeply satisfying as long as the family is not looked to as an ultimate standard.

Here Matthew 6:33 is so helpful. "*Seek first the kingdom of God.*" The emphasis is on *first*. A Christian family must provide for itself and a thousand other "seekings." But nothing else is more important than God's kingdom and purposes. Does everybody in your home know the big purpose of your home? I'm convinced that one massive failure for so many is that we never verbalize these things. We rarely talk about them. We think it just falls from the ceiling into hearts. Can I urge you to find a way to make it clear? Maybe have a family pow-wow and say, *Kids, we just want to make something clearer than we have in the past. We desire our home to be a Christian home where glorifying Jesus is the most important thing to us.* Can you just say that? I know some families who paint these things on the wall. That's one way to make sure nobody misses it. Here are a couple great kingdom family verses:

*"Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together!"* (Psalm 34:3)

"And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15)

What do you think Joshua's wife and kids thought as he boldly said that? *What's he talking about? We've never heard that before!* Or did they nod their heads knowing already that serving and seeking the Lord was the first priority of their home? *Yeah, we got that about the third lap around Jericho.*

Some of you singles imagine God honoring your marriages even though you are dating someone who isn't a Christian. How are you going to possibly say to your spouse, "*Let us exalt his name together?*" That can't and won't happen. Dump him or her and find someone who gets excited at the prospect of honoring Jesus with you for as long as you both shall live.²

Self-giving love is the norm

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

By God's common grace, sacrificial love is common to Christian and non-Christian families alike. This is one reason family life is treasured the world over. But where love is absent from a home, there we can say kingdom culture is also absent. *"Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling."* (1 John 2:9-10) Kingdom love is not just niceness. There are families like that. They just are perpetually nice but never real and never address conflict. The hot lava is always flowing just under the surface.

Kingdom love is the King's love. Agape. Serving love. Dying-to-self-type love just as that demonstrated by the King who died for us. Self-giving-for-the-joy-of-the-other-type love.

² Some seed thoughts from Anthony Bradley found in Chapter 9, "*The Kingdom Today*," p. 229ff., in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson.

Family relationships test every day whether I will be self-oriented or others-oriented. In a kingdom family, others-orientation is the norm.

That's the norm, but why isn't it always that way? When do we need self-giving love the most? When the dishes need to be done or when we have been offended, wronged, ignored, or slandered.

Here is where the King's values can change a home so much. Do you remember 1 Peter 3:1-2 and the power of just one wife living "Christianly" in the home? That so represents the truth of the gospel that a husband can hardly deny its reality as she loves him unconditionally with the same love she discovered through Christ. Our home culture could be so dramatically changed by the infusion of gospel love into our relationships and how we treat each other. Strive for that today and see what happens.

Dignity and respect for others

"And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39)

Love your neighbor. Family members will sometimes treat each other far worse than they ever would treat people in the house next to them or a coworker or frankly anyone else. Do you remember when Jesus was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" and he went on to tell the story of the Good Samaritan? (Luke 10:25-37) The Israelites translated "neighbor" geographically and ethnically. Jesus' point is not who is my neighbor but to whom can I show neighborly love? What's fascinating about the parable is that Jesus' answer shows our duty is rooted in the inherent worthiness of any human being (image bearer). The Good Samaritan didn't see a Jew laying in the road. He didn't see a beaten man lying in the road. He saw a fellow human being and felt compassion. His love wasn't constrained by racism, sexism, or even religion. He saw a human being and viewed even him being worthy of respect and honor. Where Jesus is King, the Pharisee, the blind man, the beggar, the prostitute, and the family member are all worthy of care and honor. His kingdom is like that.

This can be hard in our families because we know them so well. We know their story and baggage. We see them in the ups and downs of life. They are there all the time. Every morning, you see the same couple faces and people. Familiarity can breed contempt. Remember even Jesus got no respect in Nazareth.

Yet I have been in kingdom homes where there is such an inherent honor extended to each other. What does that look like? They listen to each other. They defer to each other. They talk positively about each other. There's a dignity to the home that I attribute to kingdom values shaping culture.

Do you love your neighbor, the one in the bedroom next to you? Do you love your neighbor, the one in the bed next to you? At the kitchen table across from you? In the car with you? Family members are the neighbors who are always with us. Love them "kingdomly."

Order and peace

"For God is not a God of disorder but of peace." (1 Corinthians 14:33 NIV84)

The context here is public worship in the church but the principle applies. We probably all know families of disorder. The family is in perpetual chaos. Nobody knows or cares about God's plan for roles and function in the home. There is a proverb that says "*When a land has no king, it has many princes.*" (Author Unknown) There are lots of homes like that. The family is a collection of independent fiefdoms as each little king fights for control. There's no unifying principle or purpose. They just happen to share the same DNA and mailing address.

When King Jesus assumes the throne of a home, with him comes authority and structure. Yes, love and respect, but also order and peace. But not always as my own home with a 3-year-old and a 1-year-old will attest. We have revolutionaries in our home and they carry on their revolt with regularity. But the culture of a kingdom home will reflect the value the King has on order and one glance at the solar system or an atom shows just how orderly he is.

Morality and obedience

A final cultural indicator for a kingdom home may be assumed but it shouldn't be. It will be a moral home that values obedience to the King. A home where its residents hunger and thirst for righteousness.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:1-4)

Undergirding these verses is the assumption of a moral home where God's moral law is taught and modeled. Kids, you have it easy! All you have to do is obey and honor your parents. Simple. Adults, we have the task of teaching and modeling obedience to the King.

I would imagine that this list is both challenging and incredibly depressing. Look at this list. It describes a home that seeks God's kingdom first, has normatives of love, dignity, order, peace, and obedience. Then we think of our homes; maybe this morning in your home. It's depressing how far off our homes often feel from these goals. The purpose of this message and series is not to condemn or depress but rather to equip and inspire. And to celebrate one more wonderful quality to God's kingdom.

Grace

God's kingdom is a kingdom of grace and our homes and our church must be built on grace. The grace of God means that while I am not all that I should be or will be, God loves me anyway. Grace doesn't undermine everything I have said because grace properly understood is highly motivational (Titus 2:12). But it does mean that God is patient with us as we grow more and more into who he would have us to be. Grace allows for fresh starts. When my 3-year-old daughter is immature and selfish, I try to parent her, but I do so with grace understanding that she is a work in progress.

All our homes and all our marriages and all our children are works in progress. Kingdom culture isn't created in one day or from one message. Cultures are created over time. There is urgency to begin working at shaping home culture, but there is grace from God as we strive over the long run.

I want this series to be inspiring, challenging, and filled with grace. Grace is a kingdom value too. Grace gives us room to evaluate where we are and to prayerfully make changes that over time become culture; I hope a kingdom culture that is honoring to our King.

A final word—if I can use the home analogy, this message is the footings and the foundation. Next week we put the flooring down and paint the walls. Practically speaking, how do we live “kingdomly” in the home? There will be lots of tips and practical helps next week.

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