

LESSON 2: KINGDOM PATIENCE

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

1. LEADER PREPARATION**LESSON OVERVIEW**

As followers of Jesus, we often feel tension: We look at a world that is broken, and long for the day when Jesus will return and bring his merciful judgment and make all things new. Truly, we ache for that day. But Jesus tells us God is not in a hurry. While the kingdom of God will one day fully come, it is still not yet here. This lesson will simultaneously help teenagers understand some basics about the kingdom of God and help them see the kindness of God's patience.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- 1. WHAT:** The kingdom of God, while here in part, is not fully here—but in the meantime we can learn from God's patience.
- 2. WHY:** Teenagers benefit from exploring a vital truth about the nature of God's kingdom and how God is patient.
- 3. HOW:** Students can learn to both live for the kingdom of God and seek the Holy Spirit's help in being more patient, as God is patient.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13:24-30

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

Psalms 86:15; Galatians 5:16-26; 2 Peter 3:1-10

TEACHING PREP

**LEADER
TIP**

Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.

Read Matthew 13:24-30.

The word *parable* means to compare, and that's exactly what Jesus' parables do. Most often they compare common and seemingly mundane things with God's future and present reign, the kingdom of God. That's exactly what we see in this passage.

Here in the middle of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus shared a series of parables that compare his kingdom with normal stuff. The crowd would have been initially drawn in by the familiar elements of everyday life, sensing

that more was going on behind the scenes. But while Jesus' parables were filled with common and everyday stuff, it seems as though his stories often left the crowds confused. Twice in this chapter, Jesus had to explain to his own disciples what he was talking about (Matthew 13:18-23 and 36-43).

In this particular parable, Jesus spoke of a field of wheat and an enemy who plants weeds amid the wheat. Faced with the decision to either pull up the wheat or let the weeds grow, the farmer opts to wait. Through this parable, we learn that currently in God's kingdom we can see brokenness and goodness—that which will be destroyed and that which will be made new. This speaks to the fundamental nature of the kingdom of God, that it is already present but not fully present.

Of equal importance is what we learn about God's patience. God is not absent from the world nor is he anxious about the world. God is patient and is patiently waiting for the "harvest," where he will mercifully judge the world and make all things new.

It's also important to note here that the kingdom of God is another way to refer to the reign or rule of God. When Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven in Matthew), he's referring to God's reign. This is—at the risk of being redundant—a reign that is here but not yet fully here.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

TEXTS OR TWEETS

Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- Struggle with patience? We all do! Be there this week to see what we can all learn from God's patience.
- Ever read about the "kingdom of God" and wonder what it is? Tonight you can start to find out. Seriously—don't miss it.

PARENT EMAIL

Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We've just finished our second lesson in our series "The Kingdom of God Is Like...." Each week, students are learning from Jesus about what his kingdom is like. We're spending all of our time in Matthew 13, so it's simple and convenient if you want to follow along.

In this second lesson, we explored Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds in Matthew 13:24-30. Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a field where both wheat and weeds are growing together. He encouraged those listening—and us along with them—to remember that God will one day make the world right, bringing his merciful judgment and restoring his creation. In this parable we learn about the nature of God's kingdom, that it was begun through Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection but is still not finished.

We also learn about God's patience. While we are often anxious about the world's events, God is not—he remains patient.

This week, I encourage you to spend a few minutes talking with your teenager about our lesson. Consider building your conversation around these questions:

- How is patience an important character trait for us as followers of Jesus?
- What are some ways that God's kingdom is here, and some ways it isn't fully here yet?
- What moments in life have helped you practice patience—and maybe even become more patient? Why are those experiences so powerful?

Thanks for praying for our students and our ministry. Have an amazing week!

LESSON 2: KINGDOM PATIENCE

2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

LEADER
TIP

In your opening discussion, the goal is to help teenagers consider several things with an “already but not yet” expression. For example: An engaged couple is not married, but they have made plans to and will be soon. In this way, you can help students begin to understand a fundamental aspect of God’s kingdom: It is present but not yet fully present.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

I’m going to read a series of situations, and then we’ll talk for a few minutes about what these situations have in common:

- *An engaged couple*
- *An item that has been purchased online but hasn’t arrived*
- *A basketball team with a 10-point lead and five seconds left in the game*
- *A test that has already been taken but not yet returned with a grade*

ASK:

- *What do these situations have in common?* [NOTE: Your students may give a variety of answers, and that’s great—but at some point, guide your group toward the answer of “the need for patience” if no one offers that response.]
- *How is patience an important quality in each of these examples?*
- *What other situations might fall into this category?*
- *How is patience an important character trait for us as followers of Jesus?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *These situations fit the “already but not yet” category, and our world is filled with this reality. We know something will happen, but we must wait. Something is in the process of emerging, yet it isn’t finished. We know what the outcome will be, but it hasn’t arrived yet. It’s one of the most basic elements of life—and it is true of God’s kingdom as well. Jesus died for our sins and rose to new life, but he has not yet returned to make all things new. In the meantime, we are called to work for his kingdom and seek to be patient.*

TEACHING POINTS

LEADER
TIP

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Matthew 13:24-30 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's spend some time learning from Jesus as we discuss another of his parables about the kingdom of God.*

1. STRIVE TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S KINGDOM

ASK:

- *What comes to mind immediately after reading this passage, and why?*
- *Identify some "kingdoms" throughout history. How would you describe them?*
- *How is God's kingdom similar to those earthly kingdoms? How is it different?*
- *This parable reveals that God's kingdom is both already here but not yet here—what are some ways that God's kingdom is here, and some ways it isn't fully here yet?*
- *Why do you think God hasn't made his kingdom fully here yet? What might be the purpose for his seeming delay?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Understanding the kingdom of God is a bit tricky, but that's one of the reasons Jesus used parables to describe the kingdom—an engaging way to help us grasp this divine reality. When we see Jesus loving outcasts and healing diseased people, we aren't just seeing a series of random events but the emergence of a new type of kingdom—a kingdom that is not fully here but already is breaking in.*

2. WHEN WE UNDERSTAND GOD'S KINGDOM, WE UNDERSTAND GOD'S PATIENCE

ASK:

- *Would your friends and family describe you as a patient person? Why or why not?*
- *When do you tend to get impatient with yourself?*
- *How do you know if God is or isn't patient?*
- *If you were the farmer in this parable, would you let the weeds and wheat grow together? Would it be tempting to try and "fix" it early and quickly? Tell me what you think.*
- *Read 2 Peter 3:1-10. How do you see God's patience in your life?*
- *How does this passage of Scripture demonstrate God's patience?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It's amazing to think about how patient God is. We have a hard time waiting a few minutes for a response to a text; we can be thankful that God is not like that. Take a moment to think about this past week—where did you mess up? Now remember that God is totally just and holy. Are you starting to see how patient God is?*

3. WE'RE INVITED TO LEARN HOW TO BE PATIENT AS GOD IS PATIENT

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It's not just that God is patient; he also invites us to participate in his patience. Just as God is patient with the world—and with us as individuals—he calls us to be patient.*

ASK:

- *Who's the most patient person you know? How do you see patience demonstrated in his or her life?*
- *God is perfect and we are imperfect, so how is it possible to become more patient, like God is patient?*
- *Read Galatians 5:16-26. This passage emphasizes that the Holy Spirit plays the main role in developing patience in our lives—but does that mean there's nothing we can do to facilitate that process? Tell me what you think.*
- *What moments in life have helped you practice patience—and maybe even become more patient? Why are those experiences so powerful?*

EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three to discuss these questions.



PAIR
SHARE

ASK:

- *Read Psalm 86:15. How does this verse reveal God's patience?*
- *When have you experienced God's compassion and mercy?*
- *The words of this verse are repeated—nearly identically—multiple times in the Bible. Why would these words be repeated so often?*

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

LIVING IT OUT

ASK:

- *Where in your life do you most need more patience?*
- *Spend some time imagining what it would look like for God's kingdom to be evident at your school. How can you be a part of living out God's kingdom among your peers?*
- *This week, how can you practice being more patient with a family member? a classmate? a friend? yourself?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Jesus prayed that God's kingdom would come, and that heaven and earth would be one. That's his heart. Jesus wants to see his redemptive reign established. Let's live that out. Let's be the answer to Jesus' prayer! But while we work for God's kingdom, let's be patient—with each other and with ourselves.*

SUMMARY



LEADER
TIP

Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

"But you, O Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15).