



A Well-Defined
FAITH

[fāth] (noun)

Biblical words used in church...
Discover what they really mean.



Sunday
April 26, 2026

Example Teaching Rhythm

Welcome and Connect: 10 Minutes

This helps people feel connected and more comfortable participating in the study and discussion.

Look Forward: 5-10 Minutes

Share any important church events, service opportunities, or upcoming group plans. Keep this brief but clear.

Look at Scripture: 25-35 Minutes

This is the main focus of Community Groups. Read the selected scripture together and guide the group through discussion questions and observations.

Prayer: 10 Minutes

Invite members to share prayer requests and praises, then pray together as a group. This is a time to support one another.

Explaining the H.E.A.R Method

The acronym **HEAR** stands for **Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond**. Each of these four steps aims to cultivate an atmosphere to hear God speak.

Highlight - After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, read the passage of scripture, and highlight each verse that speaks to you.

Explain - Explain what the text means. Ask questions like:

- Who wrote this, to whom, and why? What does this reveal about God? What do the key words actually mean? What did this call the original audience to, and what does that reveal for me?

By asking questions, with the help of God's Spirit, and by using helpful study resources, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.

Apply - This application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, work to uncover the significance of these verses and the implications they have. Ask questions like:

- What does this passage reveal about God, yourself, or the world that you need to embrace or sit with? Does this passage challenge an attitude, assumption, or habit that needs to change? Is there something to do? Is there someone to love?

Respond - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. Ask: Is there something to pray? - Let the passage shape your prayer, not just inform it. Use the "Five Daily Prayer Prompts" to guide you in your response.

“Kingdom - God’s Rule in the Human Heart”

Introduction

Some words get used so often in church that we stop hearing them.

Kingdom is one of them. Kingdom work. Kingdom impact. Kingdom living.

We put it in mission statements and vision talks, sing it into the air on Sunday mornings, and somewhere in all that repetition it quietly empties out – until we’re carrying the word around without being sure what it actually means anymore.

So before we go any further: what does it mean?

The New Testament word – *basileia* – doesn't describe a territory. It describes a reign. An active rule. Not a place people will eventually arrive at, but an authority that is either welcomed in a life or it isn't. When Jesus announces that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand, He's not giving real estate directions. He's announcing that God's rightful rule over human life is now available – here, accessible, offered to anyone willing to receive it.

That's the lens for Matthew 13.

Two parables. Thirty seconds of reading. Two thousand years of readers who haven't quite gotten past them. A man stumbles onto buried treasure while working a field he doesn't own. He wasn't looking. He covers it back up, goes home, and sells everything to buy that field. A merchant who has spent his entire career searching for extraordinary pearls finally finds one – and does the same thing. Everything. Gone. Immediately.

Different men. Different paths. One response.

Jesus offers no explanation. The parables don't need one. What they need is an honest reader – someone willing to let the question they're actually asking land where it's aimed:

Not – do you know the right things about the Kingdom? Not – are you a consistent, contributing church member?

But this: have you personally encountered the Kingdom of God as something worth that kind of response? Not as a doctrine you affirm. As a discovery that reorders everything else. That's the difference this Pastor's Cut is after.

Discussion Questions + Illustration

Select a question or two below to open up discussion.

- If you had to sell everything you owned tomorrow and could keep only one thing, what would it be – and what does that reveal?
- Have you ever wanted something so badly that sacrificing for it didn't feel like a sacrifice? What was it?
- When you hear "the Kingdom of God," what image actually comes to mind – and where did that image come from?
- Is joy a normal part of how you think about following Jesus? What does your honest answer tell you?
- What's something you're holding onto that you suspect might be costing you more than it's worth?

Illustration: In 1848, a carpenter named James Marshall spotted something glinting in a California millrace. He tried to keep it quiet. He couldn't. Within a year, 90,000 people had abandoned their homes, careers, and ordinary lives to chase what he found. Nobody had to convince them the gold was worth it. Discovery did what argument never could.

- That's the logic of both parables in Matthew 13 – the Kingdom isn't something you're talked into. It's something you find, and once you do, the math changes completely.

Highlight | Read Matthew 13:44-46

Matthew 13 is Jesus at His most concentrated – parable after parable, each one circling the same reality from a different angle. The Kingdom doesn't arrive with military force or obvious fanfare. It comes quietly, like seed scattered in a field, like yeast folded into dough.

The two shortest parables in the chapter. Back to back, no commentary. Jesus tells them and moves on.

The first man stumbles onto buried treasure while working in someone else's field. He wasn't looking. He covers it back up, goes home, sells everything, buys the field. The second man is a professional merchant who has spent his career learning to recognize extraordinary value. When he finally finds it, he doesn't hesitate. Everything goes. Immediately.

One stumbles in. One arrives after a lifetime of searching. Different journeys. Identical conclusion. The text describes how the first man feels: joy.

The Greek – *chara* – is not mild satisfaction. It's the same word used when the father in Luke 15 sees his prodigal son and runs. The man isn't sacrificing reluctantly for something he believes he ought to want. He's found something he actually wants – and the selling is easy because the finding was real.

- What does it tell you that Jesus gives two such different paths to the same discovery – and the same ending?
- What would these parables mean if either man had hesitated, consulted others, or kept a few things back?

Explain | Consider the Context

The Kingdom of God is the active rule of God over a life that has surrendered to it. Not a location. A reality.

Both parables make the same claim from different angles. The treasure suggests the Kingdom can be found by anyone, even someone not looking. The pearl suggests that a serious seeker, if honest, will eventually recognize it for what it is. What unites them is the response: total reorientation.

The hiddenness in verse 44 matters. The Kingdom doesn't impose itself – it's discovered, and discovery requires an attentiveness that distracted people rarely bring. Hiddenness is not the same as absence. The Kingdom yields itself to the person genuinely looking, not merely the one casually in the vicinity of religious activity.

Both men do the same thing immediately after their discovery: they act. No reflection. No consultation. The response arrives at the same speed as the recognition – clarity about what the Kingdom is and clarity about how to respond are not two separate moments. They come together.

- Where do you still treat the Kingdom as an addition to your life rather than a reorientation of it?
- The Kingdom is described as hidden – what has kept you from seeing it clearly in a particular area of your life?

Apply | Discuss as a Group

The parables don't ask whether the Kingdom is valuable. They assume it. The question they press is whether you've actually encountered it as valuable – because if you had, the response would be visible.

Joy is the tell. Not duty, not guilt, not social pressure. The men in both parables aren't white-knuckling their sacrifice – they're moving fast because they've seen something others haven't. Joy is what unsustainable religious effort can never produce, and it's what genuine discovery always does.

This is also where the parables get uncomfortable. Most of us have arranged our lives around things that feel precious – security, reputation, comfort, control – and we've learned to give God what's left over. The parables describe a different arithmetic entirely. Not "God plus everything I'm not willing to give up." Everything, for this. What makes that possible isn't willpower or moral resolve – it's the kind of seeing that makes everything else look small by comparison.

The question isn't what you believe about the Kingdom. It's what you're actually living as though it's worth.

- What are you still treating as a competitor to the Kingdom rather than something you'd joyfully trade?
- Where is your relationship with God marked more by obligation than by the joy of someone who found something they didn't expect?

Respond | How should I live/pray?

Matthew 13:44-46 doesn't ask for your opinion about the Kingdom. It tells two stories about two men who found something extraordinary and shows you, without commentary, what genuine discovery produces.

The discomfort the parables create is intentional – not guilt-driven religious pressure, but the honest discomfort of seeing the gap between what you say you believe and what your life actually demonstrates. That gap is not cause for shame. It is an invitation.

The early readers of Matthew's Gospel paid real costs for following Jesus – economic disruption, community exile, social marginalization. The parables don't soften that. They just change the frame: the cost isn't the story. The treasure is the story.

The man in the field doesn't go home and grieve what he's giving up. He starts selling – joyfully, urgently, completely – because he has done the math and it isn't close. The question is whether you have done that math honestly, or whether you are still treating the Kingdom as one priority among several rather than the one around which everything else is organized. That question isn't comfortable. It isn't meant to be.

But it is good news – because the parables assume the treasure is real, the pearl is genuinely there, and the Kingdom is genuinely available. The call to surrender isn't the bad news. It is the proof that something worth surrendering everything for actually exists.

- Where are you still living as though the field isn't worth buying – and what would it cost you to change that this week?
- What would it look like for the people closest to you to see the difference between a life organized around the Kingdom and the one you're currently living?

Response Tool: Five Daily Prayer Prompts

As you leave today, let these five questions carry the weight of your response into the week ahead – not as a checklist, but as an ongoing conversation with God. Introduce the five daily questions as a simple spiritual practice that can help us intentionally live out our faith in our workplaces, homes, families, and communities.

- God, where do you want me to go?
- God, who do you want me to see?
- God, what do you want me to say?
- God, what do you want me to pray?
- God, how do you want me to serve?

After this time of reflection, transition into a time of prayer requests. Allow time for members to share and, if appropriate, allow others in the class to pray for each other.

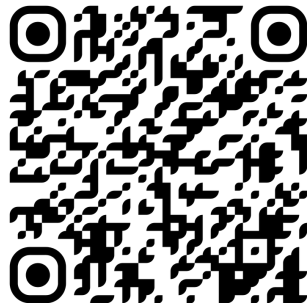
Additional Commentary

- On basileia – "Kingdom" - Appears more than 50 times in Matthew alone. For Jewish readers, it evoked the long-awaited restoration of God's reign over Israel and all creation. Jesus neither dismisses that expectation nor confirms it – He redefines it. The Kingdom arrives not through military victory but through surrender. Available now, to anyone, through faith and repentance.
- On the hidden treasure (v.44) – the legal question - Some commentators ask whether the man acts ethically – finding treasure on someone else's land and buying the field without disclosure. Jesus doesn't address it. He is not telling a parable about honest real estate transactions. The ethical question, while interesting, is a distraction from the point.
- On chara – "joy" (v.44) - The same word used at the prodigal son's return, the angelic birth announcement, and the disciples' response to the risen Christ. Not mild contentment. Not duty fulfilled. Chara is the full-bodied delight of someone who has received something they didn't entirely believe was available. It cannot be performed. It can only be received.
- On the pearl of great price (v.45–46) - Pearls were among the most precious commodities in the ancient world – singular, impossible to manufacture. The merchant's response isn't impulsive. It's the response of a trained expert who finally encounters what his expertise always told him was possible.
- On "sold all that he had" – the totality - Neither parable qualifies the sacrifice. The Kingdom does not accept a percentage. It reorganizes the whole. Not because God is demanding – but because a reign either rules or it doesn't. A kingdom negotiating for access to certain rooms is not a kingdom. It is a tenant.
- On the structure of Matthew 13 - The earlier parables describe how the Kingdom arrives – quietly, easily missed. The final parables describe the appropriate human response. One sustained argument: the Kingdom is here, it is real, and it demands everything – not as a burden, but as the only logical response to finding the greatest thing there is.

Community Group Resource Page

Visit our website to view our [leadership resources](#).

From Community Group training and resources to Discipleship Group starter guides, we want to equip you to make disciples.



Additional Study

Watch

Bible Project - Matthew



See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into Matthew and its themes.

Bible Project - Kingdom



In this video, we look at the announcement of God's Kingdom coming to earth through Jesus.

Overview

Enduring Word - Matthew 13



Text commentary, written materials, and audio/video recordings of Matthew 13.

Got Questions - Kingdom



Biblical Q&A, articles, translations, audios, videos, apps, social media, podcasts, and more on Kingdom.

Expand

Bible Ref - Matthew 13



Explore chapter and verse commentaries to deepen your understanding of Matthew 13.

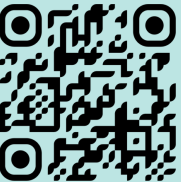
Bible Hub - Matthew 13:44-46



Parallel translations, language tools, commentaries, and much more on Matthew 13:44-46.

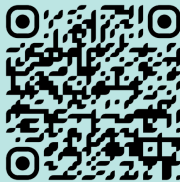
Deepen

Logos Factbook - Kingdom



Logos Factbook shares information resources and articles about the Kingdom of God.

Blue Letter Bible - Matthew 13



Original texts, Translations, Cross-Refs, Commentaries, Dictionaries + more on Matthew 13:44-46.

