

Why Kingdom Leadership Is In and Church Leadership Is Out

There is presently a revolution taking place among those on the leading edge of change in the evangelical church. The result is a transition from a church mindset to a kingdom mindset in which the walls of church buildings are no longer able to contain the raw creative energy of Christ-followers who are committed to preaching and applying the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the world, including its systems and structures.

As political solutions and big government attempts to heal our land fail miserably, more people will look to faith-based partnerships and churches to find solutions. Hence the irrelevancy of old church patterns and traditions will become more noticeable in the decades to come.

Consequently, it behooves us to continue to study the contrasts between leading-edge kingdom practices and old, irrelevant religious church patterns that have failed to effectively evangelize and transform communities with the gospel.

The following is a contrast between leaders with a kingdom mindset and those with a church mindset.

I. Kingdom leaders interpret Matthew 28:19-20 as referring to discipling all nations. Church leaders believe it only refers to all individual ethnic peoples.

The body of Christ is now re-thinking the Great Commission scriptures of Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19-20. Instead of viewing them as commands to merely evangelize individual souls, now many are viewing the command in Mark 16 to 'go into all the world and preach' as a command to apply the gospel to both individual sinners and world systems. Matthew 28:19-20 is

now regarded as the New Testament equivalent to the Cultural Mandate found in Genesis 1:28.

II. Kingdom leaders attempt to nurture and release world-class leaders who serve their communities. Church leaders nurture only those who serve in Sunday ministry.

Kingdom leaders understand that only 2 percent to 3 percent of those in their congregations are called to full-time church ministry. These leaders believe they are called to equip the saints for the work of the ministry which, in the kingdom, includes marketplace vocational ministry, not only ecclesial ministry. With this view, there is room for everyone in the congregation to be set apart and trained as a minister of the gospel.

III. Kingdom leaders understand and work with God's common grace. Church leaders only understand and work with those who have experienced saving grace.

Kingdom leaders understand that God's grace has been poured out to all of humanity so the world can function normally. Romans 13:1-7 calls civic leaders God's ministers (diakonos or deacons). If God calls unredeemed leaders His ministers then kingdom leaders know they can also partner with political and community leaders, even if they are not in full agreement when it comes to faith and core values.

Church leaders only work with those that are in full agreement with their core religious values, thus insulating themselves from the world around them.

IV. Kingdom leaders have a biblical worldview that encompasses all of life. Church leaders have a semi-Gnostic Greek view of Scripture that regards only spiritual things as important.

Kingdom leaders know that the earth is the Lord's and not the devil's (Psalm 24)! They know that the Word became flesh. Thus, the material world is also sacred and something to be

cultivated (Genesis 2:15).

Church leaders are only concerned with spiritual things like prayer, healing, the gifts and fruit of the Spirit, etc. These spiritual things are only really effective if they are applied to our walk with God and its concomitant love of neighbor as salt and light.

V. Kingdom leaders are working towards a new Christendom. Church leaders are only trying to produce individual Christians.

Kingdom leaders desire to interweave the principles of God's Word into every fabric of culture so every nation and city favors Christianity and bases civic laws on biblical precepts.

Church leaders are not overly concerned with politics and economics but with adding new converts who, without a biblical worldview, will only perpetuate humanistic ungodly systems with their partial "spiritual" gospel.

VI. Kingdom leaders teach the church to embrace their secular communities before they experience conversion. Church leaders embrace people into their faith communities only after they experience salvation.

Kingdom leaders regard their cities and communities as gifts to the church and to the people who live in them. They embrace their communities in humility and send their members into their communities as servant leaders who will be the greatest problem solvers of the most challenging human needs.

Church leaders only embrace individuals in their communities after they have professed faith in Christ. Thus, they insulate and isolate themselves and their churches from the felt needs of their communities, yet are joyful as long as their churches are growing and their bills are paid.

VII. Kingdom leaders turn the world upside down (Acts 17:1-7).

Church leaders restructure their local churches.

In Acts 17 it was said, when the apostles came into a community, that 'those who turned the world upside down have come here also.'

Nowadays the typical church mindset is only concerned with what happens within the four walls of the church building. There are many churches that, if they closed down, the local community boards, police stations, and political leaders would barely notice they were gone!

VIII. Kingdom leaders articulate Christ as Lord over every culture. Church leaders preach Christ as only the head of the church.

Kingdom leaders recognize Jesus' place as King of every secular king. This has vast cultural and political implications, and pressures the church to engage the secular arena.

Those with a church mindset only preach Christ as the head of the church and neglect Jesus' function as King over the unredeemed world!

IX. Kingdom leaders shepherd whole communities. Church leaders shepherd only their church congregations.

Kingdom leaders understand they are called to communities, not only to local churches. Hence, they see themselves as chaplains and spiritual leaders of regions.

Church leaders feel no responsibility to their communities because they feel committed only to those who attend their Sunday services.

X. Kingdom leaders attempt to exorcise demons out of ungodly social systems. Church leaders only cast devils out of individual people.

Kingdom leaders understand that Jesus came to redeem systemic sin, not just individual sin (read Colossians 1:20).

Church leaders only feel called to deal with individual evil. Thus, they interpret passages such as Luke 4:18 as dealing with the individual poor and oppressed, neglecting the systemic reference from which it came. (Read Isaiah 61:1-4 to see that Luke 4:18 concerns redeeming and restoring desolate cities, not just individuals in need.)

XI. Kingdom leaders pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Church leaders pray for revival in their churches.

The Lord's Prayer (Luke 11) teaches us to pray that God's will would be done and His kingdom would come on earth. Thus, kingdom leaders have as their prayer focus the kingdom being manifest on the earth.

Leaders with a church mindset are content with only the signs of the kingdom (healing and deliverance of individuals as found in Matthew 12:28 and Hebrews 2:1-3) instead of striving for a manifestation of the kingdom in their cities that impacts the quality of life politically and economically (Isaiah 61:3-4).

XII. Kingdom leaders believe for the gospel to economically lift whole communities. Church leaders believe for greater tithes and offerings to support their building projects and programs.

XIII. Kingdom leaders gravitate toward the complexities and challenges of cities. Church leaders gravitate toward lives of isolation and inward focus.

Before the Civil War, when the American church preached the kingdom message, the church was able to draft the founding documents of this great nation, and start schools and Ivy

League universities, all for the purpose of placing godly leaders in society as the future presidents, governors, mayors, scientists, artists, writers, etc. The church took the lead in cultural reform.

But after the horrible experiences of the Civil War the church lost hope in the kingdom being manifest on the earth and started to focus on the imminent return of Christ and the rapture. This resulted in American culture being lost to secularists in one generation!

This turning away from the kingdom message led to church leaders isolating themselves from the looming threats of biblical higher criticism, Marxism, Darwinism, the infiltration of non-WASP immigrants, Sigmund Freud and psychology, and the Industrial Revolution. These brought many pressures upon the nuclear family as men had to go into the cities to find work. Instead of engaging the culture and these challenges head-on, the American church started looking for escape and changed its theology! The present move of God is finally bringing the church back onto the biblical footing of the kingdom message.

XIV. Kingdom leaders equip people for life. Church leaders equip people for church life.

Kingdom leaders inspire and equip the saints to serve in their cities as salt and light, to be like Daniel and Joseph who prospered and held significant leadership roles in the midst of pagan systems and kings.

Church leaders train people to be good altar workers, ushers, Sunday school teachers, Sunday preachers, etc.

XV. Kingdom leaders honor Jesus' dual role as Redeemer and Creator. Church leaders separate redemption from creation.

Kingdom leaders realize that the Jesus who died on the cross (John 3:16) for the sins of the world (John 1:29) is the same

Jesus who created the world (John 1:3-4).

When we apply the Word of God to culture we are embracing Jesus' ownership of the whole world. But when we preach the cross of Christ only for individual sinners and do not also apply it to the created order we separate the Redeemer from the Creator!

XVI. Kingdom leaders are forward thinkers. Church leaders long for the past.

Kingdom leaders are excited about the future advance of Christendom in every facet of life and for every nation. They are excited over the increasing influence of Christ in culture. They train believers to replenish the earth by placing godly leaders in the realms of science, art, media, education, economics and politics. The sky is the limit for them!

Those with a church mindset long for the past, when life was much simpler and everyone in a community embraced the role of Christianity in culture. They do not like the vast complexities that social fragmentation has presented because it distracts from, and interferes with, their nice and neat Sunday church attendance parish structures.

XVII. Kingdom leaders apply their faith to the earth. Church leaders are focused on escaping the earth and making it to heaven.

The Bible is essentially not a book about heaven. It is not concerned with another geographic location whether spiritual or physical. It is mainly concerned with the person of Christ and His rule and dominion in the cosmos (read Ephesians 1:9-11)! Because of this, the Bible is the most practical book about life on the earth that has ever been written! Kingdom leaders understand and embrace this reality.

Church leaders emphasize heaven since they have no real sense

of purpose to give to the majority of their congregants who are not called into full-time church ministry.

XVIII. Kingdom leaders envision the building of universities with theology serving as the “queen of the sciences.” Church leaders envision the establishment of church-centered Bible institutes that avoid liberal arts and the humanities.

XIX. Kingdom leaders are entrepreneurs. Church leaders are stuck in maintenance mode, merely holding their ground until Jesus comes back or they make it to heaven!

XX. Kingdom leaders pray for revival to bring people into the church and reformation to place believers as leaders in world systems. Church leaders merely pray and believe for higher attendance on Sundays.

XXI. Kingdom leaders work for cultural transformation. Church leaders focus on waiting for the rapture.

Jesus told the church to occupy until He comes. Kingdom leaders are busy strategizing how they are going to start schools of government to train political candidates, start businesses to create wealth to expand the kingdom, and develop educational programs to break cycles of poverty for at-risk children.

Those with a church mindset do not get involved in quality of life issues because their theology doesn't allow for it! They think it is like arranging the chairs on the Titanic because the world will soon end when the antichrist takes over!

XXII. Kingdom leaders train their children to walk in biblical dominion in society. Church leaders' highest hope is that their children don't fall away from the faith!

Kingdom leaders have dominion as the primary goal for their children. They don't teach their children to get secure jobs in big companies; they teach them to become the CEOs of

Fortune 500 companies! They don't teach them how to fish but how to own a lake! They echo the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 28:10-13 that teaches believers are called to be the head and not the tail, to be above and not beneath, to lend to many nations and not to borrow!

Church leaders take a defensive posture with their children by merely praying that they would not fall away from the faith. Even many who teach apologetics and biblical worldview are stuck in the church mindset because they are only teaching their children how to defend the faith instead of also how to advance the kingdom!

XXIII. Kingdom leaders empower the poor to own the pond. Church leaders give the poor some fish.

Kingdom leaders understand how to break poverty mindsets over people by equipping them to create their own wealth. Church leaders have an entitlement approach in which they merely feed the poor instead of equipping them to start their own businesses or work in high-level positions that will enable them to be prosperous for the sake of the kingdom!

Joseph Mattera *has been in full-time ministry since 1980 and is currently the presiding bishop of Christ Covenant Coalition and Overseeing Bishop of Resurrection Church in New York, a multiethnic congregation of 40 nationalities that has successfully developed numerous leaders and holistic ministry in the New York region and beyond. Click here to visit his website.*