

THE KINGDOM STORY

Teaching Guide

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The Kingdom Story *Discussion Guide*

Introduction to this Week's Reading Assignment

The Kingdom Story presents the four chapters of the gospel—*Creation, Fall, Redemption* and final *Restoration*—as a framework for understanding and engaging the world we live in. Using the Kingdom Story, we will learn to analyze the events of our lives and develop our skills of interpretation.

A Note to the Teacher

This session is designed to help you teach two concepts and two correlating skills:

First, each student will need to understand and be able to use the four-chapter framework of the Kingdom Story. This session provides an entry point for developing such skills and understanding.

Second, there are sizable differences between a two-chapter gospel (The Fall and Redemption) and a four-chapter gospel (Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration). Learners need to understand the subtleties of how differently these gospels are lived out and the scriptural basis for a four-chapter gospel. The skill involved here is recognizing the subtleties of the messages we hear.

Session Objectives

- 1) To help the learner understand, state and explain the Four-Chapter Gospel
- 2) To help learners begin to identify the differences between a two-chapter and a four-chapter gospel

Resources

NOTE: In preparation for leading this discussion you may want to familiarize yourself on the Rwandan genocide of 1994—specifically, the cultural factors that contributed to the violence. A good place to start might be Mike Metzger's *Unending Horrors*.

Unending Horror, Mike Metzger—A discussion on the four-chapter gospel and genocide

The Clapham Institute [newsletters@claphaminstitute.org], **Sent:** Saturday, April 21, 2007

Class Structure

Please plan 2 ½ hours for this session.

20 minutes

Discussion: The Kingdom Story

10 minutes

Discussion Launcher: View a clip from Hotel Rwanda and compare it to the story of the Rwandan Pastor who received the first conviction for mass murder after the 1994 genocide.

See Movie Clip Introduction

20 minutes

Lecture and Discussion: How could a Christian's faith become so disconnected from his or her behavior? What are the subtleties of what we teach that might allow this to happen.

This brief lecture flows from the movie clip and is designed to help you teach the significance of a four-chapter gospel. You want your students to recognize the differences and understand the implications of both sides of the issue.

See Session 2 Lecture Notes

30 minutes

Learning Activity: Two-Chapter vs. Four-Chapter Debate & Discussion

See Learning activity Notes

25 minutes

Project Discussion: Project 1, Apply the *Ought, Is, Can* and *Will* Framework

NOTE: The projects are designed to be completed after each reading and before the discussion. Make sure that the project assignment is given with the reading assignment and that your group members come prepared to discuss the project.

15 minutes

Summing up and Assignment:

Reading – Redemptive Communities and the Kingdom of God
Project – Brush-up Social*

*Determine with your group if you will complete the brush-up social individually or as a group.

The Kingdom Story *Discussion*

Instructions: Discuss *The Kingdom Story* article. Give your team some time to talk about the article you read for this week. Use it as a time for them to ask some questions and to see if they understand the larger themes of the article. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or use the questions below. You can discuss as a large group or break up into smaller groups.

- 1) What are the four chapters of the Kingdom Story?
- 2) When sharing the Gospel, what parts are you most likely to share? Least likely to share? Why?
- 3) Did any parts of the article challenge your thinking?
- 4) What part of the four-Chapter Gospel is hardest for you to explain? Why?

Hotel Rwanda
Discussion Launcher



Starring: Don Cheadle, Sophie Okonedo, Joaquin Phoenix, Nick Nolte

Directed By: Terry George

Released By: MGM/UA

Run Time: 121 min.

Genre: Drama, War

Rating: PG-13

Movie Synopsis: Based on a true story, this war-time drama is set in Rwanda's capital city of Kigali during the 1994 civil genocide. When the Hutu majority starts massacring the Tutsi population, Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), the Hutu manager of a luxury hotel, bravely fends off the bloodthirsty militia to save his Tutsi wife, children, neighbors and more than 1,200 other refugees who seek sanctuary at the resort. More than 800,000 Tutsis were slaughtered over 100 days in 1994. Rusesabagina's story – via Don Cheadle's amazing performance – shows us the best and worst of humanity.

Scene Introduction: Tensions between Hutus and Tutsis has been building in Rwanda for months. Paul Rusesabagina watches as his countrymen prepare themselves for violence but he puts his hope in the U.N. peacekeeping delegation. In this scene, Paul is visited at the hotel where he works by his brother-in-law and wife. They are scared and warn Paul of the horrors that are to come.

Food for Thought: Could a two-chapter gospel that emphasized conversion without culture renewal have played a part in the Rwandan genocide?

Discussion Activity: This movie clip leads into a lecture/discussion on the difference a four-chapter gospel might have made. The lecture is followed by a Learning Activity designed to help us discern the differences between a two-chapter and a four-chapter gospel.

Scene Markers: From the point where Tatiana's sister and brother-in-law come to the hotel to warn Paul of coming violence (cut the tall trees) until after the next morning when Paul and Tatiana are driving through the violence ravaged city. The clip is approximately 11 minutes long.

A Two-Chapter Gospel vs. A Four-Chapter Gospel
Lecture and Discussion
20 minutes

LECTURE NOTES -

Until 1994, Rwanda was considered to be a leading Christian nation in Africa. It had more evangelistic crusades and recorded more converts per capita than any other African nation. For decades, Christian organizations measured *evangelism and the number of conversions* to gauge how Rwanda was changing. It was the most evangelized African country prior to 1994, leading some to proclaim Rwanda a new “Christian” country.

Then, on April 6, 1994, a plane carrying the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot down. The killings began that night and over the next 100 days more than 800,000 people were killed. Among the first convictions for mass-murder were an evangelical pastor and his son. Could the Church have made a difference?

Two common gospel distortions:

When we fail to consider all four chapters of the gospel we tend to emphasize one part over another and devalue or even negate the remaining part of the gospel message. When we do this we are apt to fall victim to one of two common distortions, greatly effecting how we live out our faith.

A truncated or two-chapter gospel may produce one of two common distortions:

The first distortion *emphasizes culture renewal without conversion* and results in socialized religion or the social gospel. This occurs when Chapters Two and Three of our story – The Fall and Redemption – are not applied to the individual. As a result, personal responsibility is ignored, diminishing the need for personal salvation. The Church then focuses on a social agenda and ignores the need for evangelism that results in personal conversion.

The second distortion, common within modern evangelicalism, *emphasizes conversion without culture renewal* and results in privatized religion, or personal faith without social consequence. This occurs when the first and fourth chapters of our story, Creation and Restoration, are either ignored or reduced in significance. The Church then focuses on evangelism ignoring the cultural climate in which the conversions occur. This happens because a two-chapter gospel (fall and redemption) does not recognize the value of the created order.

The objective of this lesson is to examine how we live our faith and to heal any distortion we may have inadvertently embraced. We don’t want to swing from one side to the other, switching distortions rather than healing the distortion. The only way we can do this is by looking at the gospel in its entirety and embracing a four-chapter gospel rather than a truncated gospel.

So let’s get back to the question we asked above, could the Church have made a difference in the Rwandan genocide? What does the Kingdom Story have to do with the social and cultural context in Rwanda?

Earlier we had said that the Rwandan Church had more evangelistic crusades and recorded more converts per capita than any other African nation, but faith had become privatized, disconnected from the social and cultural context in which people lived.

Let's look again at the situation in Rwanda. What cultural issues needed to be addressed and who was best positioned to address them?

Racial tension was a primary issue in the Rwandan genocide. During colonization, the Dutch produced artificial and arbitrary demarcations among the Rwandan people, elevating some to a higher status. This great injustice did not recognize the value and dignity present in all image bearers of God. The Church, having access to an elevated view of humanity and to a means of forgiveness and reconciliation, was in the best position to address this issue. It is safe to assume that many godly Christians were personally involved in ministries of reconciliation, but as a whole, the Church ignored the issue on a wider scale.

There were other significant issues that played into the problem. There was growing poverty and unemployment. Poor land use and soil depletion lead to food shortages. Government abuses and poor relations with neighboring countries also played a part. The Church did very little to address these issues. More importantly, individual Christians within specific vocations were not ruling their dominion in a redemptive way. Calling is frequently separated from vocation when a two-chapter gospel is present and Christ's lordship in domains such as farming and finance are disregarded or undervalued.

DISCUSSION

1. Did a "two-chapter" gospel contribute to the genocide? And if so, how?

Possible Answers: The "two-chapter" lens overlooked long-simmering cultural stresses because the assumption was that growing numbers of converted people naturally leads to a transformed culture. This common assumption has been refuted over time. (See James Hunter, *To Change the World*, <http://www.ttf.org/index/findings/detail/to-change-the-world/>). The problem wasn't exacerbated by new conversions and new churches but by the disconnect between conversions and cultural reform – something that was hardly measured.

2. What difference could the "four-chapter" gospel (Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration) have made?

Possible Answers: No one has a crystal ball – and you can't relive history. But things *might* have been different if the Rwandan Church had invested more of its resources in cultural and social reforms. The "four-chapter" gospel calls us to "have dominion" – a call to *form and shape all of life*. After the Fall, we are still called to have dominion, but now we also have to *re-form culture*. Furthermore, people are now fallen. So evangelism and cultural renewal are both necessary. If the Church had invested more resources in cultural renewal in Rwanda, the genocide might have been avoided.

3. What issues might the Church have addressed had cultural reform been seen as a sacred priority?

Possible Answers: The "two-chapter" gospel ignored critical cracks in the culture, including long-standing and deep-rooted animosities between the Hutus and the Tutsis, a growing population density, and a precipitous decline in per capita food production (because of drought and overworked soil, which in turn caused massive deforestation). The result was an ever-rising level of theft and violence perpetrated by landless and hungry young men.

Learning Activity
Two- or Four-Chapter Gospel - Debate/Discussion

Instructions: To debate the topic, divide your group into pairs or small groups. Assign each group one of the four following vignettes and a position to defend. Have one pair defend why the statement best represents a two-chapter gospel; have the other pair must show why it represents a four-chapter gospel. Make sure each group can identify 1) which chapters are present in the vignette, 2) which if any of the chapters are missing and 3) the difference it would make if they were present.

The vignettes are subtle because the two- and four-chapter stories have many things in common. This exercise is to help your students distinguish the subtleties. Debrief with the group after each vignette using the notes below if necessary.

Note: This sheet is for the teacher. It has the answers included. Make copies for your groups, which do not include the answers.

Vignette #1: A Pastor's Sermon

The gospel, or good news, is that Jesus came to renew the world and he is doing it through grace. The gospel is the way by which anything is renewed and transformed by Christ – whether a heart, a relationship, a church, or a community. It is the key to all doctrine and our view of our lives in this world. Therefore, all our problems come from a lack of orientation to the gospel. Put positively, the gospel transforms our hearts and thinking and how we approach absolutely everything.¹

Possible Answers: This quote seems to be a clear presentation of a four-chapter gospel. The pastor recognizes that Christ is in the business of transforming the human heart along with relationships, the Church and communities. He is presenting an all-inclusiveness to what the gospel touches.

Vignette #2: A Conference Speaker

The building blocks for the kingdom of God are made up of faithful prayer. If you want to make a difference for God all you need is faith! If you trust God he will overcome the obstacles in your way; the greatest of which is you and your efforts in the flesh. Get out of the way, let go and let God!

Possible Answers: Who can deny the importance of faith and prayer? What the speaker touches on is a real problem; we are often sinfully self-reliant. Sometimes, however, our prayers are more of an abdication of responsibility than they are real faith. God has given us dominion and we throw it right back at him and ask him to do the work for us. The first chapter of our story, Creation, seems to be undervalued here. Creation and the Kingdom of God have physical aspects to them and we are responsible to govern them. We must be careful to be rigorous in our thinking and planning. Work well done in faith, with thankfulness and an awareness of his Grace, requires both prayer and hard work.

When we ignore the Creation chapter of the gospel our faith can become ungrounded and even disembodied. However, if we misinterpret the Redemption chapter and disregard the cross we can end up with a works salvation.

¹ Tim Keller, various talks and sermons.

Vignette #3: A Passage from a Devotional

Outwardly, we seem busied for the most part about common things, with trivial duties, worthless tasks. Inwardly we are, or ought to be, studying how, in all, to please God, walking in His sight, doing them in His Presence, seeking to know how He would have them done. So amid trivial things we may be, nay men are, in every station of life, pleasing God, that is, leading angels' lives, in that they are doing His will on earth, as the angels in heaven.²

Possible Answers: This example is tricky because the author gets so much right. We are to do everything to the honor and glory of God and our inner life is essential in accomplishing that feat. I fully agree with this part of the quote.

I, however, have two problems with this passage.

First, he refers to the tasks of life or our work as, “common things, with trivial duties, worthless tasks.” The physical world and our role in it is devalued and determined to be common, trivial and worthless; only the inner life has real value. What we do is disconnected from who we are.

Secondly, there is no logical connection between these “worthless tasks” and why God cares how we do them. We just do them well out of faith and obedience. My suggestion is that God cares because the tasks aren’t worthless but worthy. This world is the realm of our sacred dominion and that dominion is over common but not worthless things.

Vignette #4: A Missions Recruiter

“There are many nice things to which you can give your life: to be a teacher, a doctor, a salesperson, but compared to being a full-time Christian worker, they are pale in meaning and impact. You could teach the ABC’s, you could sell pants, or you could save people from an eternity apart from God. Which would be more meaningful? In all reality non-Christians can teach our children to read and negotiate trade agreements on textiles, but God needs you to preach his Word! What will you do? At the end of your life, will you want to look back and count the number of computers you fixed or the number of souls you impacted for Christ? Which would be more meaningful?”

Possible Answers: I appreciate the heartfelt response we have for those dying without Christ and want to applaud this compassionate aspect of the recruiting pitch. To underestimate the value of reaching people for Christ is not an expectable position in the kingdom.

However this response definitely elevates one calling over another establishing ministry as sacred and a higher calling than other work. It denies the sacred value of exercising our proper dominion through our work. This stance undervalues the world we live in as it calls for people to give up positions in culture-shaping professions in order to harvest soul. A four-chapter gospel will place appropriate value on both conversion and cultural renewal.

² Edward B. Pusey

The Kingdom Story

Project Discussion
Applying the Ought, Is, Can and Will Framework
25 minutes

In light of the project description, have each person in the group explain the four chapters of their work (ought, is, can and will) touching on the industry/profession, individual company and personal responsibilities.

Summing-up and Assignments
15 minutes

Take care of any group business you may have, including clarifying the date and time of your next meeting.

The following are the next reading and project assignments:

Reading – Redemptive Communities and the Kingdom of God

Project – Brush-up Social*

*Determine with your group if you will complete the brush-up social individually or as a group. Discuss time and details.