



Empowering Kingdom Growth (EKG) is an initiative designed to call individual Southern Baptists to renew their passion for the Lord Jesus and the reign of His kingdom in their hearts, families, and churches from which God can forge a spiritual movement marked by holy living, sacrificial service, and global witness.

Empowering Kingdom Growth (EKG) Task Force

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To find out more about *Empowering Kingdom Growth (EKG)*, please visit the EKG section of the SBC Web site at www.sbc.net or call 800-722-9407.



Am I
a
Kingdom
person?

*If not, how can I be?
If so, how shall I live?*

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

—Matthew 6:33

The Coming of the Kingdom of God

“He (Jesus) welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:11, NIV). The crowds would not leave Jesus alone. They hungered for His ministry of word and touch. Even when He retreated to private places, they sought Him out. He had something they wanted. How did Jesus respond? He welcomed them. What did He have that attracted them? He told them about the kingdom of God. And it changed them, and it changed the world. *The kingdom of God was coming!*

The kingdom of God is the reign of God in the universe. It existed before the beginning of time, it is in operation today, and it will have a final consummation and perfection. It has application to both individuals (God’s rule in the individual heart) and to the whole of society (God’s rule at all levels).

In eternity past, Satan led a rebellion against the kingdom of God and eventually brought the rebellion to earth by inciting man to sin against God. The entire human race was hopelessly implicated and entangled in the rebellion. Through Christ, God is redeeming His creatures and reestablishing His reign on earth in general and in the hearts of men in particular. Although the outcome is not in question (God will triumph!), in the present age, the people of God must wage spiritual warfare as soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ until “the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God”

(1 Cor. 15:24). In eschatological terms, the kingdom will finally come when Christ returns.

The nature of the kingdom of God is spiritual. The transformation of rebels to loyal subjects is a result of the regenerating work of God’s Spirit. The work of reestablishing the kingdom of God on earth has been assigned to the church. As the church follows the commission of her Lord (Matt. 28:19-20), the kingdom of God grows as individuals—then families—then communities—then nations—forsake their rebellion and surrender to Christ as Lord. These converted people, in turn, become part of the church and add their strength to the struggle for the souls estranged from God. Each time a rebel turns from rebellion and, led by the Holy Spirit, pledges allegiance to Christ and His church, the kingdom of God advances, bringing transformation to individuals as well as to society.

The directive to the citizen of the kingdom of God is “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” The pursuit of the kingdom should be the organizing principle of every follower of Christ. Furthermore, laboring against the backdrop of the coming end of the age, Christians are to act with a sense of urgency because they hear the ticking of the eschatological clock.

The Call of the Kingdom of God

We sense a yearning among Southern Baptists for something greater than ourselves. How desperate we are for our lives to have spiritual power and eternal significance. We want to rise above the ordinary and the temporal. We respond instinctively to appeals for a more intimate and immediate relationship with God, to opportunities for “experiencing God” and authentic revival. We want to come to the end of our days with the knowledge we have made a difference for God. To what can we attribute this?

It is a hunger for Jesus. We have been with Jesus before and know He is the answer to the longing in our hearts. We are kingdom people and will not be satisfied until we are drawn again to kingdom principles and kingdom pursuits. It is time for Southern Baptists to hear the welcoming voice of our Lord as He teaches us about the kingdom of God.

We must acknowledge that the great blessings experienced by our denomination are the result of God’s grace toward us, and that they require of us a dedication and commitment commensurate with great blessings. And we must not be delayed by distractions or neglect. The window of opportunity to make an impact for kingdom advance may not be open long.

Therefore, Southern Baptist leaders are asking all our people to join us in a new spiritual emphasis on the kingdom of God. Our theme is Empowering Kingdom Growth. Our vision is to seek first the King and His kingdom.

More fully stated, Empowering Kingdom Growth (EKG) is an initiative designed to call individual Southern Baptists to renew their passion for the Lord Jesus and the reign of His kingdom in their hearts, families, and churches from which God can forge a spiritual movement marked by holy living, sacrificial service, and global witness.

Rather than being an additional denominational program, Empowering Kingdom Growth is an appeal to spiritual renewal in individuals and churches. While we trust that quantifiable results like baptisms, church starts, and stewardship will still be evident among Southern Baptists, we hope the impact of Empowering Kingdom Growth will be an outbreak of kingdom consciousness among our members and churches. Just as a medical EKG measures the health of the human heart, we hope the EKG initiative can help us measure the health of our spiritual hearts.

The Christian and the Kingdom of God

Am I a kingdom person? If not, how can I be? If so, how shall I live? How can I measure if I am indeed a healthy, kingdom Christian? What traits will be present? Consider these questions.

1. **Kingdom Identity.** Is relationship with Christ my first priority? Is my personal conversion experience valid and vivid? Do I enjoy regular private devotion and public worship? Do I possess an unwavering, public commitment to Jesus as the only Lord and Savior of all?
2. **Kingdom Character.** Is obedience to Christ’s kingly rule evident in my conduct and lifestyle? (In my language, in my relationships, and in my use of possessions?)
3. **Kingdom Priority.** Do I live for the sake of the King and His kingdom? Are my energies directed to Christian aims? How do I spend my time and money? Am I willing to sacrifice for the cause of Christ?
4. **Kingdom Family.** Are the principles of Christ lived out in my home? Do I honor my parents? Is my home life a positive testimony to the world? Do I honor my spouse and encourage her/him to walk with Christ? Am I modeling for my children a vibrant Christian life? Does my family have a spiritual purpose with definite kingdom goals?
5. **Kingdom Perspective.** Do I have an understanding of the comprehensive nature of the kingdom of God? Am I willing to set aside lesser goals such as personal aggrandizement, economic prosperity, cultural or national stability, or other parochial or temporal aims? Do I carry out my ministry as part of the larger kingdom enterprise? Do I value the ministry of other Christians as part of the kingdom of God, even when I am not responsible for it and get no credit for it?

6. **Kingdom Calendar.** Do I labor with a sense of urgency? Do I value the present opportunity, “redeeming the time because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16)?

The Church and the Kingdom of God

How can my church have a kingdom mindset? Consider these questions: Do I help my church keep the “big picture” in mind, recognizing the gravity and the urgency of kingdom business as we plan and execute our ministry? Do I encourage my church to recognize our local ministry as part of a larger whole? Do I subjugate my own desires in order that the whole body of Christ may be served? Do I endeavor to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Do I challenge my fellow church members to be salt and light in every arena of their lives, bringing glory to God (Matt. 5:13-16) and growth to the kingdom? Does my church have a heart for the kingdom of God around the globe? Do we pray for the kingdom to come in all the earth? Do we value kingdom work done by others? Do we send resources (personnel, money) to other strategic battlefronts and cooperate with Christian efforts beyond our own locale?

The Challenge of the Kingdom of God

The Empowering Kingdom Growth Task Force is not promoting a program. We are making this appeal and this challenge: Let us as Southern Baptists turn our attention anew to the singular emphasis of our Lord Jesus—the kingdom of God. Let us invite His Spirit to renew our hearts, our families, and our churches. We do not have a specific plan for how each individual and congregation will interact with this focus on God’s kingdom. We desire simply to be a catalyst—to unleash the movement—to empower kingdom growth.

While we will make suggestions and ask for responses, every level of denominational life—churches, associations, fellowships, conventions, and other organizations—must seek God’s leadership for themselves, as they give prayerful consideration to this initiative and its implications for their own context. We are convinced that Empowering Kingdom Growth can be the starting place for discovering and accomplishing God’s will for the future of our churches and, thus, for our denomination. We are asking God to renew us from the inside out—first our hearts, then our families, then our churches, then our Convention, then our world. Pray with us, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!”

*Rise up, O church of God!
Have done with lesser things
Give heart and mind and soul
and strength
to serve the King of kings.*