

KINGDOM NORMAL

A Word from Our PCCNA President, David Wells

In multiple contexts, from Zoom calls with leaders to backyard conversations, and from boardrooms to family rooms, there have been conversations in this pandemic season regarding what the new normal might be. Would there be one? For those in the life of the church, what should our expectations be? What would the metrics be as we look to the future?

My consistent response and clear conviction throughout have been that we needed to let the shaking of a global pandemic move us to a new day of "kingdom normal." I recognize that the phrase can sound very theoretical, even ethereal, so let me identify some practical examples of evidence we will see if we move to "kingdom normal."

The core evidence will be that as individuals, families, congregations, and movements, we will make the main things the main things. Now main things never go away. From generation to generation, there are "first things" that followers of Jesus have always had to be about if they were going to represent Him well in their time and place. The challenge has always been that the prevailing narratives of our time and place often overwhelm the kingdom narrative that believers are to live out in our lives. We live lives that are conformed rather than transformed. From century to century, there is so much tragic evidence of this some of which we are driven to lament even in our own time.

Shakings such as we have been experiencing globally allow us to fully address what our drift away from main things has been and to return to the attitudes, practices, and the shared life and mission that are normal among followers of the King. Kingdom normal is best seen in us when we pursue and live out "The Great Command," "The Great Requirement," and "The Great Commission."

THE GREAT COMMAND

The Great Command is clearly given by Jesus in response to the question, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matthew 22:36-38).



MATTHEW 22:38

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David Wells
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A first evidence of our repentance and return is that both spiritually and relationally, we in the church will experience a freshness, a renewal, that comes with “first love.” We will not just talk the Great Command, but we will experience whole-hearted, whole-minded, whole-life love for God that will be demonstrated in a sacrificial, consistent love for our neighbour.

This expression of kingdom normal flies directly in the face of the narratives of individualism and self-actualization, goals so in keeping with the world’s mould. Selfish ambition, sometimes covered by religious cloaks, becomes the source of polarization where rights are demanded and fulfilment of narrow agendas is expected. When these are expressed in the life of the church, the unity of the body can appear to be only a dream in such an environment of judgment and strife.

Yet the words of Jesus, John, and others in Scripture shout out to us the kingdom normal:

“Love the Lord your God.”

“Love one another.”

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”



Moving into the future, is it possible that we can evaluate all that we say, do, post, and initiate by what our Lord prioritized—love and sacrificial service? I pray so, or we will be condemned to a Christianity shaped by the culture’s mindset and our personal preferences. Thankfully, I have noted many fresh expressions of love for God being expressed by Canadian followers of Jesus to one another, neighbours, and local communities. Let Your kingdom come through an outpouring of love for You and others, Lord. By Your Spirit let Your love be spread abroad through us.

THE GREAT REQUIREMENT

To fulfil the Great Command demands that we also live out the Great Requirement. Micah the prophet poses the question, what can we bring to God to please the Almighty? It becomes clear that it is not just outward sacrifices that are required. It goes way deeper than that. “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Justice, mercy, and humility are main things. Motivated by God’s agape, true Jesus followers exhibit these attributes within their everyday lives. In a time where justice, mercy, and humility are being called for on so many fronts, followers of Jesus have an opportunity to demonstrate these qualities in genuine, multifaceted ways.

To demonstrate impartiality in our diverse relationships, to love being merciful, to be forgiving even when we experience wrong, and to clearly put others ahead of ourselves—this is the kingdom opportunity we have in Canada today. A self-protecting Canadian church will never seize such an opportunity. Kingdom normal means laying down one’s life for others, being in relationship with the least of these, and being living proof that just, merciful and humble people of God, full of grace and truth, can still be found in our neighbourhoods. Lord of righteousness and justice, let Your life in us lead to become a redemptive people who demonstrate Your life in every stratum of society.

Let us not strive or be self-promoting, but let us walk humbly into every context you call us to go where justice and mercy are required.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Full of God's love, empowered by the Spirit, as the Great Commission calls for, we have the privilege of going to others and seeing them formed into Jesus followers. This formation occurs as the Good News is heard and received, producing a transformation that is life-changing. Disciple making is a Spirit-empowered, relational process where truth that sets people free is modelled and taught. Kingdom citizens have received the privileged commission to bring Jesus' life to others—full, multi-dimensional, eternal life!

It is critical that we maintain faithfulness to the kingdom narratives of the Great Command, the Great Requirement, and the Great Commission. Distractions, especially during a global epidemic, beckon. We must ask, when we pursue the narratives of the pandemic—demanding rights, circulating rumours and unfounded scenarios, harshly judging leaders and others—do we find ourselves to be more loving of God and neighbour? Do we do justice, demonstrate mercy and forgiveness, and walk in humility? Are we seeing more family members and neighbours coming to living faith and being transformed into fully formed followers of Jesus? Does fresh vision inspire us to be joined with others in disciple-making communities that are pursuing the many kingdom opportunities we have in front of us?

I invite you to join me in engaging the main narratives of Scripture. Let us fix our gaze on Jesus, who will lead us into the kingdom normal life.

Lord God, we humble ourselves and recognize we are so very human. We grow easily distracted and pursue so many subplots rather than the main narrative. Draw us by the Spirit to love You completely, to sacrificially love and serve others as we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly. Empower us to be a disciple-making movement that will see many new followers of Jesus enter Your kingdom. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

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