

*Study Guide for*

***Upside-Down Kingdom***

by **Donald B. Kraybill**

**Chapters 10 - 12**

## **Chapter 10**

### **Inside Outsiders**

#### **Gathering**

- Ask a volunteer to open the session by leading in prayer.
- For the New Testament reading ask for a volunteer to read aloud *The Parable of the Two Sons* found in Matthew 21:28-32.

#### **Sharing**

- Jesus spent his time with Gentiles, Samaritans, women, tax collectors, and other outcasts of the day. Ask the class to identify times when they felt like "outsiders". How did they feel? Did anyone reach out to them?

#### **Listening and Reflecting**

- Transition into the discussion of *The Upside-Down Kingdom* by briefly reviewing the content of the text. As discussion leader, talk about a section that was particularly insightful to you.
- Divide into smaller groups if necessary to discuss the questions that Kraybill includes for Chapter Ten (found on page 261).
- After several minutes, gather back into the large group and have a spokesperson from each small group give the highlights of their discussion.
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud two paragraphs from the chapter. Begin with "God has created us as social beings..." on page 213 and read to the end of the next paragraph.
- Jesus broke through ancient Hebrew social barricades by freely interacting with

people from other "social boxes." After discussing the text, ask the class to reflect on ways they can break through the social barricades separating themselves from the list of people compiled earlier. What are ways of making your church more inclusive instead of exclusive?

### **Sending**

- End with a prayer encouraging each other to go outside the "comfort zone" of normative social interaction.
- Assign the eleventh chapter of *The Upside-Down Kingdom* (pages 218-240) for the next session.

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## **Chapter 11**

### **Low is High**

#### **Gathering**

- Open the session by leading the group in prayer.
- For the New Testament reading ask for a volunteer to read aloud *Taking the Lowest Place* found in Luke 14:7-11.

#### **Sharing**

- Ask the class to engage in personal reflection for a few moments over the questions: have you ever been elevated from a lowly to a high place? What about being demoted from a high place to a lower place? What were the circumstances? How did you feel? Ask for volunteers to briefly share their thoughts and feelings.

#### **Listening and Reflecting**

- From inward reflection, move the focus to thinking critically about *The Upside-Down Kingdom*. Before beginning discussion, it may be helpful to spend a few minutes reviewing the text. Share a section that gave you found insightful or review Jesus' response to earthly authority.
- Discuss the questions Kraybill includes for Chapter Eleven (found on pages 261-262). Allow several minutes for discussion, then reconvene and summarize important points that have been brought up.
- Ask for a volunteer to read out loud from the text. Read three paragraphs on page 238 starting with the paragraph that begins "The Christian perspective... ."
- In this chapter, Kraybill poses questions about social ladders in our churches that are difficult for us to answer. Why are these questions troubling to us? Sometimes we feel guilty because of our social position. How do we turn guilt or other negative

feelings into positive actions for God's reign on earth?

### **Sending**

- End with a prayer encouraging each other to put words into action by elevating the lowly in your church, community, and the world.
- Assign the twelfth chapter of *The Upside-Down Kingdom* (pages 241-256) for the next session.

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## **Chapter 12**

### **Successful Failures**

#### **Gathering**

- Begin the final session by asking the class to join in reciting the Lord's Prayer.
- For the New Testament reading ask for a volunteer to read aloud *The Parable of the Lost Sheep* found in Luke 15:1-7.

#### **Sharing**

- Kraybill weaves principles of Jubilee throughout *The Upside-Down Kingdom*. Have the class draw together the twelve chapters by making connections between Jesus' ministry and principles of Jubilee.

#### **Listening and Reflecting**

- From reviewing the entire book, focus the discussion on the last chapter. To open the discussion, talk about what Kraybill calls Jesus' "basin ministry."
- Discuss the questions Kraybill includes for Chapter Twelve (found on page 262). Divide into smaller groups if necessary, then regroup to summarize the highlights of the discussions.
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud from the chapter. Read the section "Habits of the Kingdom Community" on pages 255-256. Have the class read together the "Pledge of Allegiance" on page 256.
- Some churches still practice ritual foot washing. Whether or not your church does, what are ways of putting the principles of Jesus' basin ministry into practice?
- Another question you may want to ask the class in closing is: what is at least one attitude or practice you have adopted since taking this course? Or, what in your life has changed or will change because of this course?

## **Sending**

- For this final session, close with a song, prayer, special reading, or your own way of sending the class to proclaim the good news of God's upside-down kingdom.