THE KINGDOM GOVERNANCE MANDATE

Carrying the Rule of Christ into Every Field of Life

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Introduction

The presence of the Church in a nation should have consequences for the life of that nation. As people receive Christ and are formed by His Word, something should happen to the way they think, the decisions they make, the responsibilities they carry, and the things they establish. The life they have received should find expression in the world they inhabit.

We must examine the distance between the greatness of what we proclaim and the extent to which we give it expression. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord. We declare that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him. We teach that believers are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. These truths commission us for every field in which human life is being directed. There are children being formed, resources being administered, laws being considered, knowledge being developed, and communities being built. Believers are already present in many of these places. What governs their presence? What have we prepared them to accomplish there?

A congregation may have teachers among its members without having prepared them to form the people God has placed in their care. It may have businesspeople whose enterprises remain governed by the pressure to survive. It may have public officials who have never considered how their decisions relate to their stewardship before Christ. Their faith is real, but the connection between that faith and the responsibilities through which they shape the lives of others has received too little attention.

Much of the Church's strength can remain gathered while the fields to which its people return are scarcely affected by what they have received. The Kingdom Governance Mandate calls us to form, direct, and deploy that strength. What do we believe the Church to be, and what have its people been equipped to do?

The Intention We Must Recover

When God created man, He spoke of dominion. Genesis 1:26–28 presents humanity bearing His image and receiving responsibility within His creation. Man was to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and exercise dominion. Human life began with an assignment.

The Church must recover this view of man: we were created to exercise dominion before God. The capacity to think, discover, cultivate, organise, build, and govern belongs within that responsibility. The earth was a place in which the wisdom and goodness of its Creator were to find expression through those He had made in His image.

The fall brought corruption into human life and into the exercise of human power. Ability could now be employed in the service of selfishness. Authority could become an instrument of oppression. Knowledge could increase while the people possessing it remained governed by destructive desires. The problem reached into the person directing the work and, through that person, into the work itself.

The answer therefore had to reach deeper than improved arrangements. Jesus Christ came proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Through His death and resurrection, He accomplished the work by which people are reconciled to God and brought into a new life in Him. Those who receive Him belong to His Kingdom. They are brought under His Lordship and given His Spirit.

We must allow the greatness of that work to govern our expectations of the Christian life. A person who has received Christ has received more than assistance for the difficulties of his former life. He has been brought into a life with a different source, a different allegiance, and a different purpose. His understanding must be renewed accordingly.

Before the Cross, Jesus taught His disciples to pray concerning the Father's Kingdom and His will on earth. In Christ, we have now been

translated into the Kingdom of the Father's dear Son (Colossians 1:13). We serve from that established position. The Father's will concerns our homes, our institutions, our decisions, and our treatment of people. It must govern what we do with everything entrusted to us.

Seeing the People and the World before Us

There are conditions we have lived with for so long that we have ceased to examine them.

A young person can spend sixteen years or more in school and emerge uncertain of his abilities, unable to connect much of what he has learned with the circumstances around him. His family has sacrificed. His teachers have worked. He has passed through the required stages. Yet the development of the person remains unfinished.

A community can possess land, knowledge, willing people, and considerable productive potential while remaining trapped in dependence. People can become accustomed to waiting for help without recognising what they could begin to understand, organise, and develop together.

An institution can continue operating for years while failing the very people it was established to serve. Its procedures remain active, its offices remain occupied, and its reports continue to be submitted. Meanwhile, the condition that justified its existence persists.

These situations require us to look closely. What understanding produced them? What is being rewarded? What has been neglected? Who is being formed to accept the condition, and who is being equipped to change it? The believer should see people to love, conditions to understand, and work to undertake. His faith should awaken him to what can be done through the wisdom, power, and resources God supplies.

This is where the mandate becomes practical. We must move from identifying a failure to understanding the work required to address it. If

education is failing to form people, educators must be prepared to educate. If an institution is failing its purpose, those leading it must establish practices that serve that purpose. Conviction must reach the people, decisions, methods, and sustained labour through which change takes effect.

A Body Prepared for Its Assignment

Christ has given gifts to His Church for the equipping of the saints and the building up of His body. Ephesians 4:11–16 presents a people growing into maturity, joined together under their Head, with each part contributing to the life of the whole.

This divine order is essential to the mandate. The Church must know how to form its people and help them function. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers carry responsibility for equipping the saints. The saints must be prepared to undertake the work.

The teacher remains a member of Christ's body when she enters the classroom. The scientist carries that belonging into the laboratory. The public official serves before the same Lord when making a decision that will affect thousands of people. Their different assignments give the body a reach that no single ministry office could have by itself.

We must recognise and develop this reach. A minister should be able to look upon the people entrusted to him and see more than the roles they can fill within a church programme. Among them are people through whom children will be formed, enterprises established, discoveries pursued, communities strengthened, and public responsibilities exercised. Their development belongs within his concern.

At the same time, those members must receive formation. Professional competence does not, by itself, establish maturity in Christian service, and a title cannot take the place of formation. Each member needs the Word,

the fellowship of the body, correction, spiritual direction, and the development of the abilities the assignment requires.

With these assignments in view, the Church begins to labour with greater intention. We ask what our people are becoming and what they are being prepared to carry. We give attention to their judgement and character, alongside their spiritual gifts and professional capacities. We help them understand that the knowledge they receive has a purpose beyond their personal comfort.

The Government of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit occupies a supreme place in this work. The Church has been given His presence, His power, His gifts, and His direction. Our dependence upon Him must embrace the whole assignment.

Prayer brings our responsibilities before God and strengthens us to act in agreement with His will. Through the Word and the Spirit, our understanding is corrected, our perception is sharpened, and our conduct is brought under Christ's government. We receive direction, exercise spiritual authority, and minister the power of God to people.

This spiritual life must reach our work. The educator needs wisdom concerning the learner. The leader needs discernment concerning a decision. The researcher needs understanding as he investigates. Those undertaking a difficult assignment need courage, endurance, and the ability to recognise the help God provides.

We should expect the Spirit's ministry throughout the body. We must also understand the nature of our warfare. Scripture directs our attention to principalities and powers, and to the spiritual forces working through darkness and deception. People remain those for whom Christ gave Himself. Our assignment carries the purpose of reconciliation, deliverance, and life.

The authority we exercise must therefore bear the character of the King we represent. His government calls us to truthfulness, righteousness, justice, mercy, and faithful stewardship. These must become visible in the way we lead and in the institutions we establish.

What This Book Requires of Us

This book is written for people who are willing to take their place. Some already carry considerable authority. Others are students, employees, parents, or members of communities in which they hold no formal office. Each can begin where he is. Greater influence grows from serving Christ faithfully with what has already been entrusted.

The work will require sacrifice. People must be taught, abilities developed, resources committed, and arrangements established that can endure beyond the enthusiasm of a beginning. Some undertakings will take years. Those who carry them must be governed by a purpose strong enough to sustain their labour.

We will therefore examine what Kingdom government means in the formation of people and in the fields that shape human life. We will consider how spiritual conviction becomes responsible action, how people work together under divine order, and how an assignment receives a form through which it can continue and multiply.

The measure of this book will be found in what its readers undertake. An educator should recognise the life being formed through his teaching. A minister should see the assignments carried within his congregation. A businessperson should reconsider what governs the enterprise in his hands. A leader should understand the people whose future is being affected by his decisions.

Above all, each should recognise that Jesus Christ has a claim upon the whole of his life. We labour under the Lordship of the One through whom