



BLP 36. The Problem of Shallow Christianity (Part 1)

Mark Carter & Jamie Wamsley

Welcome to BLP. In today's episode, Pastor Carter and Pastor Jamie Wamsley discuss theology of the Kingdom and how leaders can access its full resources, beyond just the basics. Pastor Jamie currently serves as Associate Senior Pastor at The Chapel, a multi-site church in Chicagoland, where he has been on staff for 23 years.

- **Ministry of Jesus** // When ministry gets busy and you're drawing more and more people, it can feel like you're on a gerbil wheel. Externally one can see God is at work, but internally you can feel exhausted and spent. John Wimber, in his book [The Way In is the Way On](#), writes 'All ministry is the ministry of Jesus'. Does this ring true for your ministry, does it reflect the ministry of Jesus, what Jesus did? After being confronted with this question, Pastor Jamie reached a crossroads, he asked God, "Have I gotten it all wrong?" God led him in a process of re-examining everything he believed, Biblically about his faith, which led to a complete overhaul of his Christianity.
- **The Good News of the Kingdom** // There is a paradigm shift if you read Scripture through the lens of the Kingdom. The Kingdom God is often loosely translated as heaven, something down the road, far away. God changed Pastor Jamie's understanding of the Kingdom from heaven, to the center of the Gospel. The Gospel that Jesus preached was entirely about the Kingdom of Heaven, of God, had now come within reach. In the past, the Gospel was the good news of going to heaven after death, the context was more about the cross than the Kingdom. 1 Corinthians 15 shows us the elements of the Gospel, how we "get our sins forgiven". But, when we begin to understand the Kingdom through scripture, we see it's God's solution to our dark world. The rescue isn't just that our sins are written off, but that God brings us into the true power and true reality that we are supposed to be living in under the Lordship of Jesus.
- **How We Get the Gospel Wrong** // Gospel- it's a word we hold sacred and use often in the Church. What exactly is the Gospel? Most of the time in American Christian circles, we talk about a cross-centered Gospel, the good news that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and if we believe in Him we can be forgiven of our sins and spend eternity with him when we die. This is good news, the Gospel that Paul shared, the Gospel of Salvation. The Gospel that Jesus shared is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, that it had now come within reach of every one of us. Author [Dallas Willard](#) put it this way, 'The good news of Jesus is that we can begin to live in the Kingdom of God today through faith in Jesus'. It's not that Paul and Jesus have different gospels, it's that Paul's is more narrow (like a doorway) and fits inside Jesus' gospel (like the big beautiful home beyond the doorway). The Gospel of Jesus reveals the story of scripture and story is what shapes our identity. Once we understand the story we are living in, we understand God's identity, our identity, and the mission of God on earth. The Gospel of Jesus opens up our Christianity and makes it bigger and more expansive.

- **Kingdom tension.** // There are results for only having Paul's Gospel and not the larger Gospel of the Kingdom, for both individuals and the church at large. The Gospel of Salvation is about getting fire insurance, pray the prayer, and you're saved. All of the tension in that decision precedes coming to faith, which can breed passivity. And, it's highly individualistic because it's based on you and your relationship with God. With the Gospel of Kingdom, all of the tension comes after you come into faith; you're part of the conflict of the kingdom of darkness in our world, and you're being invited to push it back. This tension breeds a natural form of activism as you realize you're caught up in the midst of this war. It's not just about you, it's about all of us. This perspective changes our understanding of the enemy. Satan wants you to become passive and lulled to sleep. You're supposed to push against this kingdom (of darkness) and take ground from the opponent. This tension leads to a more robust understanding of why we must resist the devil, resist sin, and vie for other people to come into the Kingdom.

"There's nothing he (the enemy) wants more than for you to be bored with your faith and sit this one out... and to believe it's just about you and that you don't have a significant role to play, that your life matters in all of this." - Pastor Jamie.

- **Self-interested Christianity.** // We've created and cultivated an attitude, 'as long as I'm doing fine, that's really all that matters'. This worldview puts us at the center and doesn't get bigger than that. Even obedience can become, 'I obey, so I'm blessed', rather than to fulfill my function, join my brothers and sisters, and glorify God. The literal definition of the Church is the Kingdom of God on earth, a group of people together who are manifesting this new and different reality that pushes back the darkness and invites people into something different. Self-interested Christianity is not even a pale reflection.

"For the American Church at large, we haven't come close to experiencing the Christianity that God is calling us towards." -Pastor Jamie

Leader Application: Make sure you're explaining the full Gospel by talking about the Kingdom and inviting people into a Kingdom life and not just a slip that gets them out of God's judgment.



Jamie Wamsley | Senior Pastor The Chapel | chapel.org