

Has the King Left the Building? Why the Missional Church Needs Kingdom Cultural Intelligence (KQ)

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Introduction

Joining nearly 800,000 new users and another 18.2 million global citizens in 2025, young Drew and Shanti turned to an app to read Scripture on their phones (Fulks et al. 2025, Gryboski 2025, Trachtenberg 2024). Moved by the Jesus they see in *The Chosen*, they yearn for spiritual connection but tend to avoid traditional church, like the 29% of U.S. adults who identified as “nones” or “religiously unaffiliated” (Pew Research Center 2025, 10, 72). Spiritual hunger is rising for some (Silliman 2025), while church attendance declines (Pew Research Center 2025, 53-57). Disillusionment and busy schedules seem to overshadow Sunday mornings, according to Davis and Graham (2023, 42).

Why is this the case? Why is there spiritual hunger but rejection of the church? What might we be doing wrong? The “State of the Great Commission” report revealed most American believers do not seem concerned with Christ’s final command (Niermann et al. 2024). Similarly, van den Berge-Bakker and van der Meulen (2024, 7, 12) found the Dutch church declining and “forgetting its calling.” Might the church need “rebranding,” as Collins (2024) asserted? Why is the mission of this institution, before whom the “gates of hell shall not prevail” (Matthew 16:18), and known as “the most enduring and influential legacy of the ancient world” (Holland 2019, 14), failing to be embraced?

In a different kingdom, the kingdom of Thailand, their *Lèse-majesté* law punishes any perceived dishonor to the monarchy, reflecting cultural reverence for the king (Kelling 2024). By analogy, has the church diminished the majesty of her King, failing

to display His glory to a watching world? If Christianity is so pervasive and appealing, the glory of the King so beautiful, and His solace so needed, what is wrong? Has the King been so dishonored that He has “left the building”? For the maladies of the church of Holland, van den Berge-Bakker and van der Meulen (2024, 7, 12) prescribed a return to focusing on the Kingdom. Along those lines, applying a sociocultural lens to the Kingdom of God, this article explores how the church might better embody the values of the Kingdom to draw seekers like Drew and Shanti into meaningful engagement with the King and His Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God

The theme of God’s Kingdom and His rulership spans Scripture (Bartholomew and Goheen 2009, 2024; Bock, 2001; Fee and Nordling 2025; Glasser 2003; Goheen 2011, 2025; Henry, 1992; McKnight 2014, 2015; Snyder 1999; Spoelstra 2020; Roberts 2002; Vang and Carter 2013; Vos 1903). In Genesis, God reigns supreme and grants governance – from the sun governing the day and the moon the night (Genesis 1:16) to mankind ruling or having dominion over creation (Genesis 1:26). Moses proclaimed, “The Lord shall reign forever and ever” (Exodus 15:18 NASB). Likewise, David declared: “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and Your dominion endures throughout all generations” (Psalm 145:13a). God’s reign is acknowledged throughout the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms (Mays 1994).

In the Gospels, Jesus prioritized the Kingdom, outlining its values in the Sermon on the Mount, and teaching his disciples to pray, “Thy Kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10). Then, Peter spoke of “the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). Paul described believers’ transfer from darkness to “the Kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13). John in the book of Revelation envisioned the ultimate triumph of God’s reign: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

Exploring the literature, definitions of the Kingdom abound. Willard (2010, 7) maintained, “The kingdom of God is just God in action” and “the kingdom of God is where what God wants done is done.” Schreiner (2018, 18) defined the kingdom as “the King’s power over the King’s people in the King’s place.” Likewise, Goldsworthy (2006, 120) explained the Kingdom as “God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule and blessing.” Kraybill (2018, 18) called it an “upside-down kingdom,” and disagreed with

Schreiner (2018) over the sense of place. From a communal seminary assignment, Breshears (1984, 8) provided the following definition of the Kingdom:

The dynamic activity of the sovereign God to manifest His authority in His sin-alienated creation, by redeeming it from the domain of evil, judging all enemies, and bestowing the blessings of His beneficent reign on and through His people in fulfillment of all His promises to the praise of His glory.

Witherington (2009) preferred the word “dominion” for the Greek *basileia*. Similarly, France (1990, 15) maintained, “‘The kingdom of God’ is God in saving action, God taking control in his world, or. . . ‘divine government.’”

The notion of the Kingdom is complex. It is already but not yet, present, past, and future. Wright (1997, 471) explained, “Jesus spent his whole ministry *redefining* what the kingdom meant.” Hauerwas (1991, 82-83) exerted, “The proclamation of the coming kingdom of God, its presence, and its future coming is a claim about *how* God rules and the establishment of that rule through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.” The question remains: “How is God ruling among believers today?”

Even though the Kingdom predates the Church, another debate surrounds the relationship between the two. Biblical scholars such as Bock (2001), Henry (1992), Ladd (1959, 1962, 1996), Toon (2018, 76), and Wright (2008, 2012) prefer not to conflate the Church with the Kingdom. According to Bock (2001, 48), “the kingdom is bigger than the church.” Henry (1992, 42) asserted, “Jesus in his own person is the embodied sovereignty of God.” McKnight (2015, 11), by contrast, equated the church and the Kingdom and added, “We all learn the Christian life from how our local church shapes us.”

In contrast, Jones (1995, 8) opined, “The Church has lost the Kingdom” (Jones 1995, 18). Agreeing with Jones, we must ask where all are the “*prime* citizens of the Kingdom,” those who embrace the Great Commission and walk with obedient and repentant hearts (Plantinga 2002, 101)?

As this is a sociocultural examination of the Kingdom of God, it is beyond the scope of this article to delve more deeply into the theological issues surrounding this “multistage, multi-faceted” concept (Metts 2004, 73). Beyond this discussion, the reader is directed to Keener (2009), Perrin (2019), Schreiner (2018), and other theologians already mentioned.

Many languages and ethnic groups reside on our planet, but only two spiritual kingdoms exist. When Satan tempted Jesus, Satan declared, “I will give You all this domain and its glory, for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I want” (Luke 4:6). Jesus told the Pharisees, “You are of your father the devil” (John 8:44). Their ways were not His.

Kingdom ways differ radically from the manner in which most humans have been socialized, from the ways of the world, the flesh, and the devil. God proclaimed His ways were higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8). Even the reign of our Lord was not a usual one. Our King was crowned with thorns and given a wooden sign reading, “King of the Jews” (Matthew 27:37). As Wright (2012, 132) proposed, “The kingdom and the cross are part of one another.”

The way out of Satan’s kingdom and entrance into God’s, then, must involve radical change, death to old ways, and something called being born again (John 3:3), a process requiring repentance for our rebel nature (Matthew 3:2, 4:17; Acts 2). Since Genesis 3, humans have been enemies of God (Romans 5:10), slaves of a rival kingdom, and traitors. Humankind certainly committed *Lèse-majesté*, so welcome into the King’s presence requires contrition, change of allegiance, and a sincere pledge of eternal loyalty and fidelity (Luke 14:26).

Culture and the Kingdom of God

Turning to explore culture, Delpit (2005, xxiv) wrote, “We all carry worlds in our heads, and those worlds are decidedly different.” Sire (2004, 123) synthesized worldview definitions and believed worldview to be “a fundamental orientation of the heart.” However, not to conflate worldview with culture but focus on the latter, Lee (2025, 13) agreed culture might be defined as “what matters to a person,” whereas Swidler (1986, 273) found culture to be the “symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems.”

Those with high cultural competence or high cultural intelligence can more successfully bridge cultural divides. Cultural intelligence or CQ is “the capability to function effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures” (Earley and Ang 2003, 5). CQ involves the cognitive, metacognitive, behavioral, and motivational dimensions, covering CQ Knowledge, Drive, Action, and Strategy (Van Dyne et al. 2012, 301). As a missionary to the Kingdom of Cambodia for twenty years, I learned to navigate that foreign culture through these elements, including acculturation, studying the language, immersion into the worldview, and cultivating relationships.

It would seem the church needs to cultivate Kingdom Cultural Intelligence or KQ. Acquiring KQ could equip believers to live as Kingdom citizens and better represent Christ’s reign to outsiders. Like the development of CQ, cultivating Kingdom Cultural Intelligence would involve more than emphasis on the cognitive dimension. Similar to my missionary journey and that of anyone entering a new “world,” people like Drew and Shanti require guidance to understand and live out Kingdom values. How might the church foster this process?

People might learn the lingo and some tenets and behaviors of the Kingdom, but is that all a Kingdom citizen needs? Adapting the researched elements of CQ mentioned above, the proposed domains of KQ would need to cover the spiritual/theological as well as the educational, an element of CQ Strategy and of CQ Knowledge. The anthropological domain and knowledge of cultural values also become critical, as well as the communicative, psychological, and sociological, all depicted in Figure 1.

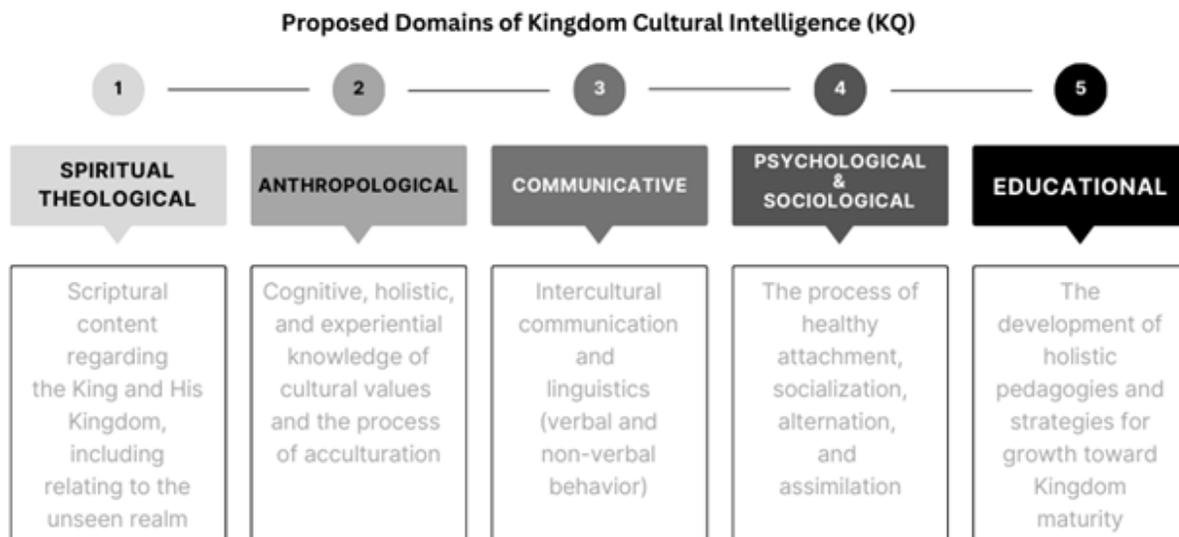


Figure 1. Proposed Domains of Kingdom Cultural Intelligence (KQ)

Cultural Values and Systems

Developing CQ involves understanding cultural systems and the values that shape behavior and identity. Secular cultures vary in orientations toward power, individuality, time, rules, activity, gratification, etc. (Hofstede 2011; Livermore 2015). On the next page, Table 1 summarizes and contrasts seven key cultural values.

Table 1. Cultural Values/Orientations

Cultural Values/Orientations

Power Distance (PDI): Orientation toward authority and power	High PDI: Emphasis on status and rank (hierarchy)	Low PDI: Emphasis on equality and egalitarianism
Individualism vs. Collectivism: Orientation toward person/goals (self versus group)	Individualism: Emphasis on self, personal goals, privacy, grit, and independence	Collectivism: Emphasis on group, loyalty, belonging, cooperation, and interdependence
Competition vs. Cooperation (or Masculinity vs. Femininity)	Competition: Emphasis on achievement, strength, and individual success	Cooperation: Emphasis on collaboration, caring, and agreement
Long-Term vs. Short-Term (LTO): Orientation toward time (focus on future rewards vs. immediate results)	Long-Term: Emphasis on perseverance, thrift, and future implications. Failure attributed to lack of effort.	Short-Term: Emphasis on tradition, quick results, stability, social spending and the needs at hand. Failure attributed to luck.
Universalism vs Particularism: Orientation toward rules/standards	Universalism: Emphasis on applying rules consistently across situations (universal application)	Particularism: Emphasis on applying rules consistently across situations (universal application)
Being vs. Doing: Orientation toward activity	Being: Emphasis on quality of life and relationships	Doing: Emphasis on task completion, accomplishment, and measurable outcomes
Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR): Orientation toward gratification or control of desire	Indulgence: Emphasis on freedom to enjoy life and have fun. Has a perception of life control	Restraint: Emphasis on control of desires through social norms and rules. Has a perception of helplessness

Kingdom Cultural Values

Kingdom values contrast sharply with those of “the world.” God warned His people in Leviticus 18:3-4 to avoid walking in the ways of surrounding nations, but to obey Him alone. Jesus instructed His disciples not to lead like those steeped in the world’s system, but to serve (Matthew 20:25). Even more contrary to the ways of the world, the overarching value for Christ followers revolves around love (Matthew 22).

Early Christians were described as people who “live in their own countries as though they were only passing through” (Diognetus 5:5. See Radford 1908.). Unlike American individualization and independence, which may have fueled the rise of the “nones” (Schnabel et al. 2025, 4), Kingdom culture requires repentance, which “means stepping out of independence back into dependence” (Thomas 1999, 49). As Ryle (2023, 8) advised: “Satan’s dominion must be put down within us and the kingdom of God set up. Self must be crucified, and Christ must reign.” Otherwise, we may continue to find ourselves guilty of *Lèse-majesté* and dishonoring the King before a watching world.

Table 2 delineates the differences in the cultural values of the Kingdom and those of secular cultures and the “world.”¹ As mentioned earlier, Kingdom living stands in stark contrast to the ways in which we might be socialized to live.

Table 2. Kingdom Cultural Values Contrast with Those of the World

Kingdom Cultural Values Contrast with Those of the World (*continued on next page*)

Cultural Values/ Orientations	Kingdom Cultural Values/Orientations	World’s Cultural Values
<p>Power Distance (PDI): Orientation toward authority and power</p>	<p>High PDI with God as Sovereign, but with a Low PDI path. Jesus sent His Spirit to live within His subjects, so there is no fear to enter His Presence. On earth, Jesus emphasized humility and servant leadership. Among His subjects there should be unity and equality, operating in the gifts and callings of the King according to His will.</p>	<p>High or distorted PDI characterized by rebellion against God’s authority or abusive human hierarchies. See Luke 22:25-26, Romans 1:21-23, and 2 Timothy 3:2-4.</p>
<p>Individualism vs. Collectivism: Orientation toward person/goals (self versus group)</p>	<p>High collectivism orientation with the individual factored in. Community is emphasized, with love being the supreme rule. Harmony and unity are valued. The common good is prioritized in the giving of gifts (1 Cor. 12).</p>	<p>High individualism, prioritizing personal gain, selfish ambition, and independence over community. See Gal. 5:19-21, Phil. 2:21, James 4:1-2, and 1 John 2:15-16.</p>

¹ Note: This research was confirmed in discussion with the artificial intelligence, Grok.

Table 2. Kingdom Cultural Values Contrast with Those of the World *(continued)*

Cultural Values/ Orientations	Kingdom Cultural Values/Orientations	World's Cultural Values
Competition vs. Cooperation (Masculinity vs. Femininity)	Highly cooperative from a position of being empowered by God. Nurture, caring, cooperation, mercy, peace, humility, etc. are highlighted, as opposed to competition, rivalry, assertiveness, or material success and achievement. Subjects are admonished to “do nothing out of self ambition or vain conceit” (Phil. 2:3).	High competition, emphasizing individual achievement, rivalry, and material success, often at the expense of others. In cooperative settings, the vulnerable are exploited. See Prov. 14:30, Luke 16:14-15, 1 Tim. 6:9-10, and James 3:14-16.
Long-Term vs. Short-Term (LTO): Orientation toward time (focus on future rewards vs. immediate results)	High long-term orientation. The culture of the Kingdom prioritizes eternal outcomes and long-term gains, requiring perseverance (Heb. 12:1). Our “treasures are in heaven” (Matthew 6:20) because this world is temporary, so gratification of the flesh would be foolish.	Short-term orientation, prioritizing immediate gratification and quick results. See Eccl. 2:10-11, Luke 12:16-21, 2 Cor. 4:18, and Heb. 11:25-26.
Universalism vs Particularism: Orientation toward rules/standards	Universal principles with particular grace (Grok). God’s laws are universal, but grace can be found and bestowed.	Particularism or rigid universalism, depending on the context. See Prov. 17:23, Is. 5:20, Matt. 23:23-24, and Rom. 2:11-15.
Being vs. Doing: Orientation toward activity	Status is ascribed by the King with obedient doing resulting from the King’s indwelling presence. We are called to relationship, in which He dwells within us, as His subjects. We have been adopted, given rights and privileges. The mark of our ascribed status obtained by the blood of Christ results in obedient doing through the power of the Holy Spirit (James 2:17).	Emphasis on doing for self-glorification or being for personal comfort. See Eccl. 4:4, Luke 18:9-14, Col. 2:20-23, and 1 John 2:17.
Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR): Orientation toward gratification or control of desire	High value for restraint with joy in submission (Grok). Denial of the flesh and living the crucified life is critical to the Kingdom (Matt. 16:24), as life in the Spirit empowers us to live differently from the world, the flesh, and the devil. In the midst of God’s provided boundaries, joy, protection, and abundant life reside (John 10:10).	High indulgence, seeking unrestrained gratification of desires, or excessive restraint driven by fear or legalism. See Rom. 13:13-14, Gal. 5:16-17, 2 Tim. 3:4-5, and Titus 3:3.

Cultural Migration and Acculturation: Leaving the World System

In our world, many people migrate—sojourners or visitors, immigrants and refugees, expatriates working for multinational corporations, third culture kids (TCKs), and those who marry partners from a different culture and become bicultural, etc. Table 3 delineates these options. Short-term visitors hold temporary visas. Expatriates might obtain longer-term work visas. Where might home lie for each? Some who enter a new land to settle permanently may or may not integrate or acculturate. For others, such as TCKs, their birth culture might never be “home.”

Table 3. Cultural Migration & Acculturation

Cultural Migration & Acculturation			
STATUS	BIRTH CULTURE IS "HOME"	RELATIONSHIP TO SECOND CULTURE	RELATIONSHIP TO KINGDOM CULTURE
VISTOR	✓	SHORT TERM VISA	NO SHORT-TERM VISA
EXPATRIATE	✓	WORK VISA	NO WORK VISA
IMMIGRANT REFUGEE	✓	YOUNG MAN ASSIMILATE WHILE OLDER MAY INTEGRATE TO SOME EXTENT, SOME MAY SEPARATE OR BECOME MARGINALIZED.	KINGDOM CITIZENS BECOME ALIENS IN OUR FIRST/BIRTH CULTURE
THIRD CULTURE KID	✗	CULTURAL CONFUSION. ACCULTURATES BY CREATING A THIRD (EARTHLY) CULTURE	WE CANNOT CREATE A NEW CULTURE COMBINING THE WORLD AND THE KINGDOM
BICULTURAL	✗	INTEGRATES BEST OF BOTH EARTHLY CULTURES	WE CANNOT CREATE A NEW CULTURE COMBINING THE WORLD AND THE KINGDOM
KINGDOM CITIZEN	✗	TOTAL TRANSFORMATION AND ALTERNATION TO KINGDOM CULTURE	KINGDOM CULTURE BECOMES HOME

Berry (2005, 698) defined this journey toward acculturation as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members.” Becoming acculturated or even attenuated involves changes in practices, values, and identity (Schwartz et al. 2010).

Those who become bicultural tend to choose the best of two worlds, while TCKs create a new culture, a blend of home and host. However, as Barker (2015, 56) explained, “Home-culture core values are rarely abandoned in favor of host-culture ones and the latter are not simply added.” Change of cultural identity in the secular world is rare (Barker 2015, 68) because assimilation involves a “change of cultural patterns to those of the host society” (Singelis 1997, 71). The process involves “culture shedding and culture learning” (Berry 2005, 700) with no competing loyalties.

What helps those crossing cultures succeed? Wilson et al. (2017, 1499) found that relationships in the host culture assisted with cultural adaptation. El Amine and Cascon-Pereira (2024, 16) found expatriate success involved every dimension of life - individual, interpersonal, and organizational. Entering the Kingdom resembles this kind of cultural migration and making a new home. We might extrapolate from the research, then, that successful Kingdom flourishing involves the same elements as does acculturation. In the interpersonal dimension, success requires solid Kingdom relationships. Organizationally, the successful Kingdom citizen would need to feel integrated into the body; and individually, successful Kingdom citizens need satisfaction in ministries and adjustment to Kingdom life.

While growing in CQ and acculturating to a new culture, every sojourner decides how far to take the process. Unlike sojourners or expatriates who incorporate a few cultural values or learn to appreciate facets of a new culture, true Kingdom citizens become aliens (1 Peter 2:11), fully transformed through repentance (John 3:3), leaving the ways of the world behind (Romans 12:2) for a new family and “city” (Hebrews 11:10).

Unfortunately, Kingdom citizens embracing and portraying these cultural values of the Kingdom seem to be rare. Reportedly, “the typical American adult is not a worldview purist but is essentially a worldview plagiarist, combining beliefs and behaviors borrowed from an average of nine recognized worldviews into their personal worldview blend” (Barna 2024, 2). A troubling statistic revealed that “among all adults in the nation [U.S.], only 16% say God is the most important element of their life” (Barna 2025). KQ, then, is needed now more than ever.

Developing KQ: The Content and Process

What is the solution? Ernest (2021) blamed a “massive discipleship failure” that has been caused by a “massive catechesis failure.” Research by van den Berge-Bakker and van der Meulen (2024, 7, 12) found Dutch believers paralyzed by timidity. According to Budde (2011, 124), “The commercial ‘orchestrators of attention’ . . . are winning a

contest that church leaders scarcely recognize as underway.” Roadblocks to developing KQ abound. The world is constantly trying to squeeze earthlings into its mold.

Focusing on the educational dimension of KQ from Figure 1, how might we effectively develop KQ and teach the cultural values of the King? Mendenhall and Oddou (1985, 43) found secular acculturation to be multidimensional. Similarly, Talbert (1985, 62) found discipleship involves “being molded by a tradition, being empowered by an experience, and being a participant in a community.” If leaving the culture of the world, the flesh, and the devil requires radical transformation, repentance, and change of allegiance, how might one effectively disciple in such a multidimensional way?

The only solution seems to be “worldbuilding.” Discipleship as worldbuilding would deconstruct old plausibility structures and build new ones (Berger 1966, 49). This is the process of “culture shedding and culture learning” described by Berry (2005, 700). To build an entirely new world in the human heart, to implant the cultural values of the King, what processes need to be in place? According to Livermore (2009, 41), “As God’s kingdom subjects, we live out the gospel by both embracing and protesting various cultural values just as Jesus did.” Additionally, what might be this “curriculum for Christlikeness” to which Willard (2010) referred?

Discipleship as Culture Shedding and Culture Learning

If Christ is King, everything, quite literally, every *thing* and every *one*, has to be re-imagined, re-configured, re-oriented to a way of life that consists in an obedient following of Jesus. This is not easy. It is not accomplished by participating in a prayer meeting or two, or signing up for a seven-step course in discipleship at school or church. (Peterson 2007, 9)

If we consider Table 2, which contrasts Kingdom ways with those of the world, we readily observe the content a new believer requires. These Kingdom cultural values are the essence of Jesus’ teaching reframed in sociocultural terms.

Ultimately, however, King Jesus Himself is the model. Given that fact, “Scripture functions not as a text to be dissected but a canon to be lived” (Hauerwas and Willimon 1986, 119). “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Kingdom citizens are to embody and display the cultural values of the King. “The early church emphasized morality as much as doctrinal fidelity,” according to Presley (2024, 38); and like “cultural sanctification” proposed by Presley (2024, 23), “Early Christians had to deconstruct many assumptions . . . and slowly begin to construct, through steady

discipleship.” We shed the values of the world (on the far right of Table 2) and learn to embrace the new values of the Kingdom, so contrary to our own broken ways. As Garber (1996, 107) shared, what is needed is to “form habits of heart.” This must be the missional church’s primary curriculum.

KQ Acculturation Training

Like the training of a missionary crossing cultures, the process of KQ development and Kingdom acculturation does not occur in a vacuum. Triandis (2006, 25) confessed, “To make a person culturally intelligent requires extensive training.” As mentioned earlier, it “takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry 2005, 698). Relationship is key. The process is akin to socialization, which is more than cognitive, but highly emotional, involving attachment to significant others (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 4). Resocialization or secondary socialization to Kingdom culture revolves around choice of identity and attachments, requiring “human interaction or dialogue to affirm the plausibility structure of the new world” (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 178). Hong et al. (2013, 1027) also argued “that the adaptive solutions of acculturation are analogous to those of infant survival and growth—forming secure attachment to people in one’s environment enables one to function adaptively therein.” Do we see this presently in the church? Are new Kingdom citizens acculturated with such a process? Davis and Graham (2023, 52) found that those who left the church hungered for “authentic friendship and sincere community” and experienced “cracks in their spiritual foundations.” The church needs experienced spiritual mothers and fathers to shepherd the young into this world of the King.

Bennema (2025) described early Christian mimesis as observing and imitating Christ-like exemplars, fostering moral transformation. The early church modeled this through time spent in relationship, through narrative, through catechesis, and communal living (Acts 2:46-47). Similarly, Garber (1996, 22) studied young people who stuck with Christianity after college and found that those who “successfully integrated faith with life” had spiritual mentors, spiritually committed peers, and a worldview that could withstand scrutiny.

What ways or processes could such spiritual guides employ? Swidler (1986, 849) proposed using symbol, story, ritual, and worldview. Deardorff (2020, 5) maintained narrative should be used because of the “power of storytelling.” Smith (2013) likewise advised the use of ritual, liturgy, narrative, and embodied pedagogies, more holistic forms than merely focusing on the cognitive. He contradicted the notion that “learning

(and hence discipleship) is primarily a matter of depositing ideas and beliefs into mind-containers” (Smith 2016, 3). Collins (2024) agreed with a more affective emphasis: “The church could highlight the feeling of being in community and the security of God’s care, especially in fellowships that had heavily emphasized obligation, making church feel like a chore.” The glory and beauty of the King needs to be a focus of every missional effort.

Considering the emphasis on narrative, in the early church, Irenaeus (Irenaeus/Smith 1952, 69) used a scriptural metanarrative to reframe converts’ identities, just as modern scholars propose a fresh look at the Grand Narrative of Scripture (See Bartholomew and Goheen 2009, 2024; Glasser 2003; Goheen 2011, 2025; McKnight 2014, 2015; Spoelstra 2020; Roberts 2002; Vang and Carter 2013). Along these lines, non-Christian sociologist Carroll (2001) wrote a controversial book with the subtitle, “The western world is dying for want of a story”; and in his later exploration of the book of Mark, scolded the church, saying, “The Christian churches have completely failed in their one central task – to retell their foundation story in a way that might speak to the times” (Carroll 2007, 7).

At the intersection of the research on acculturation, the history of early church catechesis, and consideration of modern needs lies the following essential elements for developing KQ in the missional church:

- Increased intentional time spent in relational community, building *ekklesia* with mentors and peers (Garber 1996)
- Increased time spent in an intentional discipleship process. In the early church, pre-baptismal training lasted about three years (Presley 2024, 1).
- A focus on the process of transformation and leaving “competing loyalties” (Caynor and Mischke 2025, 232)
- An emphasis on mystery, glory, and beauty as opposed to obligation (Johnson-Miller and Espinoza 2018)
- More experiential learning as opposed to a cognitive focus, observing and practicing Kingdom values in context as Jesus modeled (Leung et al. 2014, 510)
- An emphasis on the use of narrative, sharing God’s story to reshape identity (Deardorff 2020, 5)

Conclusion

In conclusion, during the coronation of England's monarch, the King received a golden globe while the Archbishop of Canterbury proclaimed, "Receive this orb set under the cross and remember that the whole world is subject to the power and empire of Christ our Redeemer" (Howard 2016). Although humankind has rebelled since Genesis 3, "the Kingdom project" is stealthily at work (Treat 2019). While Americans might not have "grown more prayerful" or more Bible-believing (Pew Research Center 2025, 64-65), God still builds His Kingdom, still desires to live through His Kingdom citizens.

In the Old Testament, the mark of God's people was His kingly and glorious Presence with them (Exodus 33:16). In the New, the mark of Kingdom people involves allowing the King to dwell within them, manifesting the glory of God through their lives. If Drew and Shanti are to grow into mature Kingdom followers, we need to foster their KQ through narrative, relational community, and experiential discipleship. Missional churches wanting to honor the King of glory will be involved in these Kingdom endeavors. "Satisfaction with life abroad depends on CQ," according to Jurásek and Wawrosz (2023, 1). Similarly, what if satisfaction in the Kingdom might just depend on KQ, Kingdom Cultural Intelligence?

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