

## ICEBREAKER

- What was a phase that you remember going through growing up?
- How did these phases shape how you talked, dressed, and saw the world around you?
- If you could revisit one phase from your childhood or teenage years, what would it be and why?

## IDEA 1 - OUR VISION VS EXPERIENCE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

*“The scary truth is that for some of us the Kingdom of God feels like that – a beautiful ideal but vision of the good life that just doesn’t fit with the one we already live. It’s like we try to fit God’s Kingdom into our already busy lives not realizing the radical transformation it demands. In the battle for this vision, we often settle for something less than the revolutionary one Jesus calls us to.”*

- What is your reaction to these words from Efrain’s sermon?
- Where does your vision and understanding of the Kingdom of God, not line up with your current experience?
- What specific aspects of the Kingdom vision feel most challenging to integrate into your daily life and why?

## IDEA 2 - PROPHETIC DISCERNMENT AND EXPECTANCY

Efrain pointed out the prophetic language used in the opening chapter of Mark.

He highlights that these prophetic voices in Scripture and in our lives today help us discern God's activity in our lives and create an expectancy that enables us to respond appropriately to the Kingdom breaking into our world.

Efrain shared a personal story of how his professor's words "You're very smart, Efrain" were like a prophetic declaration that changed how he saw himself and gave him a greater expectancy of God’s calling in his life.

- What has been your experience with prophetic voices in your life?
- Has someone ever spoken prophetic words over you that changed your self-perception or future direction?
- Are the voices you are currently listening to aligning you with God's Kingdom and how he sees you? What are ways that we can discern this?

### IDEA 3 - EXPERIENCING THE WILDERNESS

Efrain goes on to describe the wilderness experience of Jesus. Jesus is compelled by the Spirit to spend 40 days of testing in the wilderness as a way of preparing and refining Him for what's to come.

- What is your current "wilderness" experience?
- How might God be using it as a refining and preparatory space?
- Jesus relied on the Spirit, prayer, and fasting during his wilderness testing rather than "sheer will and determination." What spiritual practices help you remain faithful during your own wilderness seasons?

### EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER: DISCERNING VOICES

Take 3-5 minutes in listening prayer together.

**Ask God "Which voices in my life am I listening to that are in alignment with you and your Kingdom? Which voices are distractions?"**

End with a simple prayer: *"Lord, give us ears to hear the prophetic voices you've placed in our lives, courage to respond with repentance when needed, and clarity about who you've called me to be in your Kingdom."*

## PRACTICE FOR THIS WEEK - EMBRACING THE WILDERNESS

Here are a couple practices to prayerfully consider as you look to embrace the wilderness season you are in:

### **1. Identify your testing points**

Take time to name the specific challenges or temptations you're facing in your current wilderness. Write them down, then next to each one, note how Jesus might have responded based on what we know from scripture. Commit to facing one difficult situation this week with spiritual resources (prayer, scripture, worship) rather than relying solely on willpower or avoidance.

### **2. Look for provision in unexpected places**

The sermon mentions that angels attended to Jesus in the wilderness. Each day this week, intentionally look for and document God's provision in your wilderness - whether through an encouraging text, an unexpected resource, a moment of peace, or the beauty of nature. This practice helps train your eyes to see God's sustaining presence even in difficult seasons.