

“Kingdom Circles”

by Rebecca Lewis. *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26:1 Spring 2009, p18
 (A sidebar in the article “Insider Movements: Honoring God-given Identity and Community”
http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/26_1_PDFs/26_1_Lewis.pdf)

Kingdom Circles

This diagram distinguishes between two kinds of identity: *spiritual* and *socio-religious*. The center circle represents the Kingdom of God. People gain a new *spiritual identity* by entering God’s Kingdom through transforming faith in Jesus Christ. The other circles represent various *socio-religious identities*.

Figure 1 shows that many Jews in the book of Acts followed Jesus as Lord and thus entered the Kingdom of God (A). These early disciples gained a new spiritual identity but retained their Jewish socio-religious identity, continuing to follow the Jewish law and worship at the temple alongside non-believing Jews (B).

Figure 2 likewise shows that many Gentiles in Acts followed Jesus as Lord and entered the Kingdom (C), though most Gentiles remained non-believers (D). In Acts 15, some Jewish believers insisted that non-Jews had to join the socio-religious system of Judaism to be saved (E). Paul disagreed and brought the issue before the apostles in Jerusalem. The apostles became convinced, by both the Scriptures and the fact that God gave the Holy Spirit to these Gentile believers, that non-Jews did not have to “go through” Judaism to enter the Kingdom of God.

Figure 3 shows the situation we face today. Over the centuries, “Christianity” has become a socio-religious system encompassing much more than simply faith in Christ. It involves various cultural traditions, religious forms, and ethnic or political associations. While many people who call themselves Christians have truly believed in Christ and entered the Kingdom of God (F), others have not, though they may attend church (G). The Acts 15 question is still relevant today: Must people with a distinctly non-Christian (especially non-Western) identity “go through” the socio-religious systems of “Christianity” in order to become part of God’s Kingdom (H)? Or can they enter the Kingdom of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone and gain a new spiritual identity while retaining their own community and socio-religious identity (I)?

International Journal of Frontier Missiology

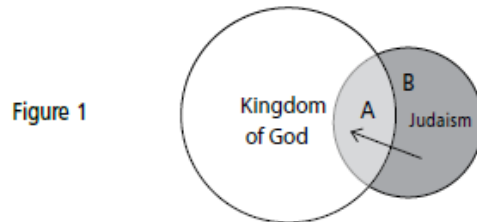


Figure 1

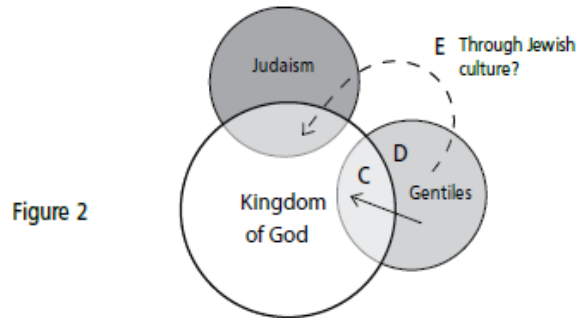


Figure 2

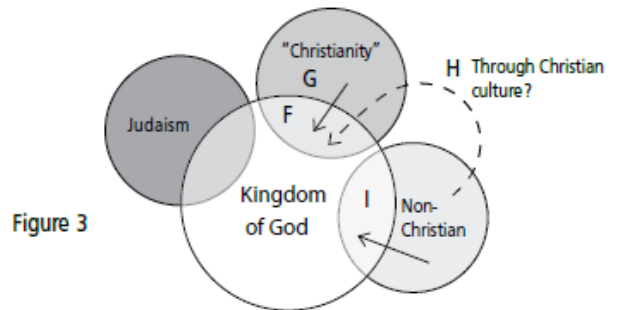


Figure 3