



Kingdom's Call (Kingdom, Book 4)

By Chuck Black

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*A sworn enemy of the Prince vows to eliminate his Followers.
Until the Prince saves his life...*

For generations the Noble Knights have been in service to the King. Following a strict code of conduct, they preserve the peace in Chessington, the King's chosen city, and rule its citizenry. Sir Gavin is a young and promising Noble Knight, devoted to King and Code.

Then a peasant disrupts the tranquility of Chessington, brazenly challenging the Code while claiming to be the son of the King—a Prince. When it is learned that he is actively training a force of men in defiance of the law, the stranger is arrested and executed.

But his Followers continue to defy the Code, and Sir Gavin swears to destroy this threat to Chessington—until he himself is grievously wounded in battle. As he faces his own death, Gavin is saved by someone who will transform his heart and change his life...

Journey to Arrethtrae, where the King and His Son implement a bold plan to save their kingdom; where courage, faith, and loyalty stand tall in the face of opposition; where good will not bow to evil—and one brave man stands against the Dark Knight.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Chuck Black spent eight years in the Air Force traveling the world as a communications engineer and an F-16 fighter pilot. Today, Chuck is a product design engineer and has invented or co-invented eleven patented construction products now being sold internationally. His passion in life is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and to love his wife, Andrea, and their six children. The Blacks take their family music ministry on the road, singing Christian gospel, contemporary, and traditional songs. Chuck and his family live in North Dakota.

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A Noble Cause

Gavin saw the blade of his foe flash toward his chest and brought his own sword to bear the powerful blow just in time. His adversary pressed hard with a volley of powerful cuts that would have placed any excellent swordsman into a defensive retreat, but Gavin stood strong and did not yield his ground, for he knew that Chessington's only protection from Outdwellers like these thieves and marauders lay solely in the powerful swords of the Noble Knights. Gavin was in the midst of a hundred flashing swords, and the sound of battle was in the air all around him. It was once again a battle to defend the precious treasures of Chessington and her people from the chaos of a kingdom filled with repressive and greedy brutes.

Although Gavin was a young knight, he had acquired the skill of an expert swordsman. He did not hesitate or retreat from his enemy's onslaught, but masterfully met each blow with the mighty sword he wielded, using quick and powerful combinations that nearly found their mark. Feeling the hesitation in the fight of his enemy, he replied with another slice and a quick thrust that put his opponent down.

"Behind you, Gavin!" came a shout from a fellow Noble Knight.

Gavin turned to engage his new adversary, but it was too late. A sword blasted into his helmet and sent him reeling to the ground facedown, dizzy and in pain. He rolled onto his back and realized that his helmet had been knocked clean off of his head. The world was a blur as he tried to focus and regain control of his senses. His new opponent wasted no time in bringing a deadly vertical cut down on him, and Gavin felt helpless, for it was impossible for him to bring his own sword into a protective position in the split second that remained. As his opponent's weapon raced toward his chest, Gavin heard the yell of a familiar voice and a powerful sword came across to meet the one that was about to end Gavin's life. As the two swords collided, Gavin rolled and recovered to see a fellow knight engage and attack his would-be executioner. Within a moment, the foe was bleeding and retreating from the fight. The knight turned and looked at Gavin with concern.

"Are you all right, Sir Gavin?" he asked.

"I am now. Thank you, Lord Kifus. You have saved my life once again!"

The two men positioned themselves side by side, looking for the next fight, but the marauders were under retreat. The two forces slowly disengaged, and the sounds of clashing swords diminished. Gavin turned to face Kifus and took a deep breath in an attempt to recover from the intensity of the fight. He offered his hand in appreciation. Kifus removed his helmet and smiled at Gavin.

“You are welcome. I should expect you to return the favor someday,” Kifus replied as he took Gavin’s hand.

Kifus had personally mentored Gavin, who had served as Kifus’s squire for many years until he earned the right to become a knight himself. Gavin’s skill with the sword and his zeal for the Code won him that right earlier than any other man in the history of the Noble Knights. Now, at twenty years old, he had already become one of the top five knights in Chessington, carrying on the tradition of his family. In reality, Gavin’s skill had the potential to transcend that of every Noble Knight. In the heat of a sword fight, he felt as though he could predict the moves of his opponent. He did not have to contemplate his next maneuver; it seemed to be a natural ability that flowed through the muscles of his arms and legs. An older knight’s experience occasionally led to his defeat, but it was only a matter of time before the rising young knight would be second to none, not even Kifus.

The Noble Knights gathered around Kifus and rejoiced in their victory.

“For King and Code!” Kifus exclaimed.

“For King and Code!” echoed the force of Noble Knights.

They were powerful, well-trained knights, and the citizens of Chessington were thankful for their protection. Through the years, they had defended the borders of the city against every kind of enemy the kingdom threw at them, and there were many. Without a wall to protect it, the city was vulnerable, and the Noble Knights knew it was their duty to protect every Chessington citizen. These were the King’s chosen people, and the Noble Knights were the chosen of the chosen. Anyone not a citizen of Chessington was considered an Outdweller, and although not all were enemies, the distinction was clearly evident in their dealings with such people.

Even within Chessington, some of the Noble Knights became arrogant in their position of prestige, but not Gavin. He was a man who was zealous for the cause of the King and desired to live by the letter of the Code with perfection. Although he harbored no ill feelings toward Outdwellers who were not enemies, he knew that he was Code- and honorbound to the citizens of Chessington exclusively.

“You fought well today,” Kifus said to Gavin as they rode their mounts into the city. Many people had lined the streets to cheer their champions, and most of the knights basked in the adoration.

“Thank you. Your training of the knights has proven to be our salvation once again,” Gavin said.

Kifus appeared indifferent to the compliment.

“My younger sister has asked of you, Gavin. I think a visit from you would be well received.”
Gavin became slightly embarrassed. Leisel was a beautiful girl, and he felt honored that Kifus would consider him an appropriate suitor for his sister, but he did not expect such an offer. Gavin was a serious young man and felt that the time and energy it would take to cultivate a relationship with a woman would take away from his duties as a Noble Knight, especially in times like these, when all the kingdom seemed bent on destroying their beloved city.

More cheers rose up from the streets as the Noble Knights turned a corner, and the powerful steeds they rode raised their heads to look even more noble.

“I am honored, Lord Kifus. Perhaps in a few days there will be an opportunity to afford a visit. Thank you.”

Kifus nodded and smiled. "I shall inform Leisel."

The knights gathered in Kifus's courtyard to hear his final words, for evening was fast approaching and the weariness of battle was closing on them.

It was the privilege of the leader of the Noble Knights to reside in the remnants of the grand palace built by the people for Lord Quinn many years ago. Although it was but an echo of its former glory, the palace was still the pride of Chessington. The great hall of the palace was where the Noble Knights often met to discuss the affairs of the city. Kifus conducted frequent training with the knights in the front courtyard. Although the palace was the usual domain for the knights, contests between the knights were always held in the city square nearby. This was to allow the citizens an opportunity to witness the skill of each of the Noble Knights as they fought to determine their ranking within the order. The people of Chessington loved to attend the duels, for it comforted them in these days of turmoil.

Within the palace were many halls, rooms, and chambers that were once used for various functions, but most were now empty and unused. With the exception of Kifus's sleeping quarters, which were in a separate building near the center of the palace grounds, the Noble Knights were granted full access to the palace.

"Well done, fellow knights," Kifus said, still atop his mount. "You have upheld the Code and protected the King's city once again. You fought well, and I am proud to be the leader of this noble force. We shall meet in the great hall in one week at the usual time."

Kifus drew his sword and held it high. "For King and Code!"

The knights all drew their swords. "For King and Code!" they replied in unison. The men then disbanded and returned to their homes.

Gavin lingered within the courtyard until he was its sole occupant. He dismounted and tied his horse near the edge of the courtyard.

"Well done today, Triumph." He stroked the beautiful white coat of his stallion. Triumph nickered and seemed to nod his head.

Gavin walked to the steps of the great hall and entered. He continued to a door at the back of the hall, the sound of his boots echoing on the stone floor in the silence of the large empty room. The door's massive hinges and lock were indicative of the treasure that lay behind it. Gavin reached beneath his armor and produced a key that symbolized years of disciplined training, for only Lord Kifus and the top five knights were given such a key. As a young squire in training, he had purposed in his heart to attain the elite position of one of those five, but it was not for self-glory. It was for moments like this...freedom to access the contents of this room whenever he desired.

The lock clicked loudly, and Gavin pulled on the thick doors to open them. They creaked in resistance but gave way. He lifted an oil lamp beside the doors before entering, then walked down a narrow hall and into the inner chamber. The lamp flooded the small dark chamber with light to reveal the treasure within. There was no gold, silver, or any precious stones--those were in a lesser chamber and were not the treasure that Gavin desired to see. Within the room was a lone table that held the precious treasure. Gavin placed the lamp on the table, and its light revealed an ornate wooden frame that held a single piece of parchment.

He drew his sword and placed it before him as he knelt before the Articles of the Code. Written in the hand

of the King Himself, Gavin felt that he was in His presence here. Gavin's heart seemed to draw strength from being so near to the Code. There was not a doubt in any corner of his mind as to his purpose in the kingdom. It was ...

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