# The Kingdom of God is Relational

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*People not projects. People not protocols. Relationship not rules.*

In the beginning, God "walked in the garden in the cool of the day…Adam, where are you?"

'Come, let us reason together…' (Is 1 : 18)

Our instinct is to 'build something' or 'do something.' Eg. transfiguration - to build shelters etc. (Luke 9 : 28 - 33.)

If offering a gift at the altar, and there remember… (Matthew 5 : 23 - 24)

It is *always* easier to 'do something' than care for and / or restore a relationship.

**Appl :** In the working world, we 'get the job done' regardless of 'people collateral.' (We are 'commodities' - Adam Smith, 1776 "The Wealth of Nations" and the 4 factors of production - industrial revolution - far more destructive than Darwin's Origin of Species.)

**Appl :** In 'church' / religious world, as long as a service is 'run' correctly, it doesn't matter if relationships are not restored, issues addressed, or people are not served…

Unity = anointing & blessing. Psalm 133 : 1 - 3.

'The word became flesh and dwelled among us.' (Jn 1 : 14) Jesus didn't pre-record a sermon, and provide us with a link to 'watch later' on Youtube. He didn't speak from a platform and deliver a sermon, and then as quickly as possible zip out the side door so he could avoid people…

Jesus touched the leper. He sat down and ate with a sexually sinful Samaritan. He invited himself for tea with a tiny tax collector. He asked Thomas to 'touch my hands' where they had been pierced by nails.

Jesus is relational.  God is relational.  The Kingdom of God is relational.

**Appl :** Investing in people - Jesus primarily invested in 12.  It was time consuming, costly (time wise.)  (This leads to another potential 45 hours as we talk about relationships.)

Notice, that Jesus didn't start an organisation, build an empire, or pioneer a movement.  He spent time with a few friends.  Walking together, Eating together. Sleeping in the same house together...

...rebuking...correcting...laughing...joking...fun...

**Apl:**  Evangelistic projects...huge amounts of energy invested… but how many lives are changed.

**Eg.**  Of going to a church meeting...doing a thing…no one speaking to us...doing it all again for years…

I'm repentant in my own situation at BCStM's.  COVID hasn't helped!  Grrr.  We had a beautiful time in Living Spring.  Mission trips are so powerful...

...because the Kingdom of God is relational.

Obviously we have to go to work, and we have to pay the bills, and we have to fix the car, and we have to pay for builders to fix the house, and we have to traipse around Morrison's and fill the fridge with food...

*BUT, to seek the kingdom is to prioritise relationships, because the Kingdom of God is relational.*

**Apl :** Doing stuff doesn't bring the kingdom, as much as doing stuff allows us to build relationships, because the kingdom of God is relational.

**Eg.**  I work in a school.  I have to do some stuff.  I have to teach adequate mathematics lessons, and help pupils to pass mathematics exams.  However, as I do that stuff, I'm slowly cultivating relationships…

**Eg.** I preach sermons and help lead a church. Dare I say, putting on slick and sensitive and professional church service doesn't bring the kingdom. Yes, of course, God can (& hopefully does) speak to us through services. But it's usually sitting with a friend during the week, and processing what happens on Sundays when 'the real stuff' happens.

Eg (Air War and Ground War)

**Eg.** We have friends who are busy, busy, busy...always trying to squish things into a schedule. Scheduled friendship! Well, great! BUT. The real kingdom comes when we're sat at the end of an evening around a fire pit. When I'm sitting with my friend in a park during a lunch break, eating a sandwich, he tells me what's really going on in his heart.

Yesterday, S.J. spoke on "Wilderness" - and it's only in the wilderness that we're so broken, that the Holy Spirit can finally address some of the issues in our heart that we would NEVER deal with otherwise…

The Kingdom of God comes when we willingly enter into relationships with others at the level that we are inviting them to address issues of our heart…. They are "Wilderness with Skin On"

Very, very few people are willing to go there - we all talk about wanting authentic relationship, but very few people are willing to pay the cost….

...the Kingdom of God is Relational.

**Apl:** Give people time. Stop trying to cram as much into your day as possible, at the expense of spending time with people.

**Apl:** What rules can you get rid of at home...which allows you build relationship instead of trying to preserve control. (Kids are nagged senseless about keeping the cushions straight, to the point that they hate you. Husbands are nagged to within a degree of sanity about putting the toilet seat down, to the point they want a divorce..)

**Apl:** What rules can we get rid of in church? We have to do this, and that, but not that nor this, on this day, but not that day...

**Apl:** Become a great listener…

**Apl:** Take the lemons out of your mouth, and start to have fun! People are attracted to fun.

**Apl:** Learn to make small talk - practice on people all the time. ("*I'm not into small talk...I'm too serious…*) REPENT of htis lie. (Some people do find it easy than others, that is true….but we EVERYONE can learn and become brilliant at it, with practice.)

**Apl:** Make a mental list of everyone that is part of your church and make a point of inviting person and every family round for a cup of tea, a snack, or a meal (not necessarily at the same time) over the next 6 months...