

Cultivating the Culture of the Kingdom in This Sticky Area of Your Life

God's righteousness, His character and His perfection have always been covenant-based. His covenant of commitment to us cannot be broken. As I seek to reflect that element of His kingdom and character in my own life, I must ask whether my relationships are in good shape. Why am I in them? Is it for me? Or is it for the kingdom of God? Am I in relationship with people for my personal benefit, for how they make me feel, or for what they can do for me? Or is it so that the kingdom of God can be revealed on Earth regardless of the prospect of any benefit to me?

I have relationships that are easy, and I have some that are difficult. All of my "easy" relationships are covenant relationships, but not all of my covenant relationships are easy. How then must my heart be changed?

There are people to whom I give my life because it's not difficult to do. They make it easy. Others are not so easy. I, therefore, bind myself in covenant to the difficult ones because it's the kingdom thing to do in spite of the fact that they give me a royal pain in the backside: "For the love of Christ constrains us" (2 Cor. 5:14).

I am compelled to do this because it's the heart of my God who loves each of us with a depth of grace not conditioned on the performance of the ones He loves.

This calls for a deep shift of emphasis. Three times Jesus commanded Peter in John 21, "Feed My sheep!" (vv. 15–17). He meant: "Get out of yourself, Peter. Put the kingdom first, loving others first, ministering the love of the Father first, and go take care of My people. Be poured out for them!"

We must cultivate a culture of the kingdom reflecting the heart and character of God; a collective mind shift, a fresh mentality, a different way of thinking and living. Do you understand what you're really asking when you pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done"?

A culture is a group of people who belong to one another, who identify with one another; and it takes more than you alone for the fruit of that kind of mindset to manifest itself, even in your personal life. It requires all of us being in it together, encouraging one another, reinforcing one another, and seeking the Lord together.

Jesus performed miracles because of oneness with His Father. In relationship and intimacy with His Father, He knew when He was moving and moved with Him because He knew it wasn't about Him. It was about revealing the Father. The kingdom of God, therefore, calls us to demonstrate the true nature of the Father on the earth and to walk in it. Jesus told the disciples, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9b).

As a people together, therefore, we seek to develop a kingdom way of thinking and living until the air around us is as alive with the presence of God, as the air around Jesus was almost 2,000 years ago.

Jesus did not mean that His command to seek the kingdom of God would set us upon a quest to see miracles. Especially in renewal circles, it seems we've too often equated it with that. The miracles of the kingdom begin, not with a desire for miracles, but with the Father's compassion for people flowing through us. The Father's heart of mercy and love is revealed on Earth through His disciples. Miracles were the by-product.

A kingdom mentality focuses not on self and personal need for fulfillment. The heart of the kingdom of heaven is compassion, the Father's love, and concern for those we touch. It's the

reach beyond ourselves. It requires that we seek intimacy with the Father and become in our character what He is in His love. Miracles and experiences of the supernatural will be the result, not the goal, but in a true kingdom mentality we understand that we can only go there together.

We must come into this together because it won't work for us one at a time. It's a culture that nurtures the individual, but it's not a private, individual thing. This is why we're alive. This is what we were born for. God has ordained a destiny for us in the kingdom of God. He will manifest the truth of who He is as destiny flows from the intimacy with Him that all of us who hunger for Him will come to know. {eoa}

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