Christ's Death and Resurrection brought us Transformation and Access into His Kingdom

Building relationships within the Kingdom of God is to connect people together for a common purpose and to assist their progress toward full devotion to Christ by intentionally providing an environment for connection, networking, community, spiritual formation, regular prayer meetings and training to raise disciples.

The church exists not to collect followers, but to transform them: to travel with them in their brokenness and nurture them as the Holy Spirit convicts and sanctifies them, then send them out. Church life is the sum of all the activities that promote Christ’s work of transformation and real transformation starts with individuals, then grows to reach others and therefore to reach the city. The ultimate purpose is to move people toward a greater relationship with Christ and to transform them into His image. The Church’s primary mission is therefore to help believers to be like Jesus; a follower of Christ must become a disciple of Christ.

The first thing that should come to our mind therefore is the mandate for Spiritual Transformation. Jesus Christ, as Head of the church, intends His followers to become like Him:

“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”
[John 13:15]
It is the plan of God the Father that those who call on the name of His Son, i.e. Christ’s disciples, should be like Jesus in attitude and behaviour. So what is this discipleship? In the simplest form, a disciple is an apprentice to Jesus:

“A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.” [Matthew 10:24-25]

We therefore define discipleship as ‘living as Christ would if He were in my place’.

Discipleship implies a life of transformation and dependence on the Holy Spirit: your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Jesus said to “…seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33) So to become a disciple you need to seek the kingdom of God first, understand its rules and act upon it.

Someone may ask ‘Why the kingdom?’

The mark of a kingdom is the presence of the king. A disciple of Christ must accept the rule of God’s kingdom, which is a spiritual state in which the life of God and of heaven is made accessible to men, and they enter into its enjoyment here on earth. If we ask what its marks are, we find the answer in the wondrous change we see in the life of the early disciples who travelled with Jesus during his time on earth before He ascended into heaven.

When the Holy Spirit came down to dwell in Christ’s disciples as really, and more nearly, than when He was with them in the flesh. The abiding nearness and fellowship of Christ, and in Him of God the Father, is the very central blessing of the Kingdom. This experience was what the Holy Spirit at Pentecost made real to all who choose to follow Jesus (Acts 2). The disciples had their Lord with them as consciously as the angels in heaven; His presence made heaven all around and in them.

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”[John 16:13-15]
A believer, to whom a full entrance into the Kingdom is given, has His presence: the mark of the kingdom is the rule of the king. King David reminds us that “His Kingdom rules over all.” (Psalm 103:19)

Before Pentecost the disciples could not love or be humble, could not trust or be bold. But when the kingdom came, the dominion of God prevailed. God’s Presence through the Holy Spirit gained the victory, sin was overcome, and the will of God done in them to pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10) He promised this:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” [Acts 1:8]

As the Kingdom came down with the Holy Spirit, the promise was fulfilled and our entering into the Kingdom means our being brought into a life in which God rules over all, His will is truly and joyfully done, and all the blessedness that reigns in heaven finds its counterpart here below. As it is written, “For the kingdom of God is … righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,” (Romans 14:17) and the mark of the Kingdom is power: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” (1 Corinthians 4:20)

Just think of the work these simple fishermen dared to undertake, and were able to accomplish. Think of the weapon with which they had to do their work – the despised Gospel of the crucified Nazarene. Think of all that God wrought through them and see how the coming of the Kingdom brought a new power from heaven by which feeble men were made mighty through God; the slaves of Satan were made God’s holy children.

To enter the kingdom is to be born again, read the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus:

Nicodemus asked: “How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” [John 3:4-8]
To receive the Kingdom implies two things: there is one who gives, and another who accepts. How many there are who have heard of the blessed life in the Kingdom, the wonderful joy it gives and who have never thought that it must be received from the living God Himself.

What we need is to be brought to such consciousness of our utter ignorance and impotence such that we feel we cannot grasp or apprehend this wonderful salvation that is offered. But we have come into contact with the Father in heaven and as a heavenly bestowal we receive from Him the Kingdom in power. Furthermore, this is not something that we have to persuade Him to give us, but as the child’s portion that actually belongs to us and that He yearns to see us enjoy. It is as we believe this and look up to the everlasting God, infinitely ready and able to give the Kingdom in its power into our very heart that our hearts will take courage to expect that the Kingdom with its blessings can indeed enter into us. Then our accepting will become so simple.

When we see the God who has promised in His infinite love, just as the sun seeks to enter with its light and life into every little flower and every blade of grass, longing to enter into us and be all that as God He can be, we shall understand how our place is simply to rest in what He will do, to claim His great gift of the Spirit who brings the Kingdom into us and to wait in patient dependence for Him to do His mighty work. Our position day by day will be as of those who, having accepted, now count upon God to reveal and work in us that entire He has for us.

To be in the kingdom you need to be like Christ and act like Christ, this is hard but that is the only way. The likeness to Christ consists chiefly in two things – the likeness of His death and the likeness of His resurrection.

At Easter we commemorate the death of Christ. Christ’s death was the consummation of His humility and obedience, the entire giving up of His life to God. As we sink down in humility and dependence and entire surrender to God, the power of His death works in us and we are made conformable to His death.

We also commemorate His resurrection and do we know Him in the power of His resurrection, in the victory over sin and all the joy and power of the risen life. In Him we are dead to sin, therefore every morning present yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead. He will maintain the life He gave, and bestow the grace to live as the risen ones.
“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.”[Romans 6:4-5]

All this can only be in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you; count upon Him to glorify Christ in you. Count upon Christ to increase in you the inflowing of His Spirit. As you wait before God to realise His presence, remember that the Spirit is in you to reveal the things of God. Seek in God’s presence to have the anointing of the Spirit of Christ so truly that your whole life may every moment be spiritual.

As you meditate on this wondrous salvation, and seek full fellowship with the great and holy God and wait on Him to reveal Christ in you, you will feel how needful is the giving up of all earthly things and receive Him. Seek grace to know what it means to live as wholly for God as Jesus did. Only the Holy Spirit Himself can teach you what an entire yielding of the whole life to God can mean. Wait upon God and in every request for fellowship with Him, be accompanied by a new, very definite, and entire surrender to Him to work in you. Here, as through all Scripture and in all spiritual life, this must be the keynote.

And as you tarry before God, let it be in a deep quiet faith in Him, the Invisible One, who is so near, so holy, so mighty, so loving. In a deep, restful faith too that all the blessings and powers of the heavenly life are around you, and in you: yield yourself in the faith of a perfect trust to the ever-blessed Holy Trinity, to work out all God’s purpose in you. Begin each day thus in fellowship with God, God and His Kingdom will be all in all to you.

How does a disciple who carries the kingdom of God can function in the local church and in the Marketplace? A Christ follower or disciple is also a person who carries the love of Christ everywhere and is someone who is maturing in grace, growth, group, gifts and stewardship.

There is a philosophy of ministry structured around five key values, the 5 Core Values, The Five G’s:

**Grace:** Christ followers desire to expend the grace they’ve received to others through personal evangelism and spreading the gospel in their communities, neighbourhood, suburbs, cities and nations (ref. John 17:8,18 and Ephesians 2:8-9).
**Growth:** Christ followers know that the grace of God that saved them is only the beginning of His work in them. They gratefully respond; actively pursuing a lifelong process of spiritual growth in Christ and by seeking to become conformed to His image. They consistently nurture their spiritual development through prayer, worship, and bible study. They regard the Bible as the final authority in all areas that it teaches about and desire to be wholly obedient to it. They look deep into their self and confront areas of personal sin and engage the Holy Spirit’s power in seeking to turn from sin, through repentance (ref. Romans 6:6 and 2 Peter 3:18).

**Group:** a Christ follower honours God’s call to participate in community in order to grow in Christ-likeness, express and receive love and carry out the ministry to others by:

- Pursuing Christ-honouring relationships at home, within the church, and in the marketplace, and are committed to pursuing the biblical pattern of reconciliation when conflict arises
- Supporting the leadership of the church and are biblically submissive to it
- Affirming and uphold the fundamental truth of Scripture
- Connecting with others in significant relationships (ref. Acts 2:46)

**Gifts:** Christ followers recognize that the church is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and furthering the ministry of the church and the Marketplace (ref. 1 Corinthians 14:12 and Romans 12:6-8).

**Good Stewardship:** Christ followers realise they have been bought with the price of Christ blood and that everything they are and have belongs to him (ref. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). They desire to be responsible caretakers of the message of the Kingdom and the Scripture, supporting each other to transform societies and protect their Christian heritage.

This is a good vision to have, but we must continue praying also to build Christian Communities across the city.

A true Christian Community is the body of Christ expressing the life and message of Jesus Christ to build up one another and redeem the world for God’s glory”. Christian communities are built up when we bring unity among all Christian denominations, to pray, to network, to love each
other and support each other to spread the love and gospel of Christ across the city and the nation. Christian communities are built up when we focus on major issues in our society and we stand against false beliefs, unhealthy moral issues and other corruption that is affecting our societies. Christian communities provide fellowship and mutual support, they encourage and build up one another so that the body of Christ can be cared for and the world can be influenced through their good deeds.

It all starts with you and your relationship with the King: die to yourself, be in-filled with the Holy Spirit, carry your cross with all the pain, suffering, humiliation and disappointments, but be assured that God will raise you up and give you strength to continue the journey as you rely on Him. Hang on to the cross and never let go of it and you Father in Heaven will reward you.

References:

Scriptures: Psalm 103:19; Matthew 6:10,33, 10:24-25; John 3:4-8, 13:15, 16:13-15; Acts 1:8, 2:46-47; Romans 6:4-5, 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:20, 6:19, 12:7; Hebrews 10:24-35 (most passages were reproduced from NIV translation).

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