

Kingdom People, Big Questions: Summary

Introduction

I have a friend: he has been a faithful Christian most of his life. He has faithfully served in many different ways over the years, sought to follow Jesus as best he could, the way he has been taught; he has done many things, but has serious doubts about the actual difference he has made in this world; he has taken part in many church activities, but struggles to see how most of them serve to build the Kingdom of God.

I have another friend: brought up in a Christian family, the son of a church leader, served as an integral part of several evangelical churches, listened on a regular basis to some of the best preaching of the time; but he encountered things which did not fit the teaching and the worldview he had been brought up with; he started to ask questions which the members of his Christian community were unable to answer and which, it became clear, he was not supposed to ask; he started to see inconsistencies between the message being preached about fulness of life and joy and purpose and the actual experience of the people around him, mostly just struggling in all the usual ways; he could not reconcile all these conflicts and hold onto belief in what appeared to be empty words; he no longer calls himself a Christian, but neither can he bring himself to fully embrace the empty secularism of our society.

And there are many others: friends, acquaintances, and passing contacts; I have listened to them, talked with them, sought to help them in various ways. Over and over again, I have spoken with individuals (church members, church leaders, those who have left the church, and those who have never belonged to one) and been told that our current systems and structures are not meeting their needs.

What they have in common is that they feel isolated; they are looking for someone who will listen to them and not tell them they are wrong for feeling the way they do, someone who will not tell them the answer is to pray more, read the Bible more and trust God more. They appreciate the time I can give them, but I don't have either the capacity or the wisdom to offer them what they need. What they need is a community which accepts them just the way they are, and encourages them to grow in the ways they care about.

We will encourage people to grow through sharing, connecting and learning from one another, by exploring the things they care about and are motivated by, and by helping them find ways to engage with society as a whole and serve the people around them – not by telling them what to do but by opening doors and offering support.

To be fair, there are many others in our churches who are very happy, many for whom the current systems are working well, or well enough. We want to encourage the churches and other groups in the wonderful work they are doing; we want to help them to become more successful and more effective in their work, and we want to function in partnership with these existing structures to serve the people who are not currently being enabled to thrive through their work.

Details

The key question facing us today is: *How can we make the world a better place?*
Our objective is to provide one part of the answer, a place where we can:

- *explore* questions and issues;
- *articulate* policies and values; and
- *propose* solutions and strategies.

Our vision is to change the character of the Christian community and our wider society by building a grassroots movement through providing a virtual space which offers people three related facilities:

- *a community*, where you can belong, be safe and be accepted;
- *a forum*, where you can discuss questions and concerns; and
- *a platform*, where you can express the things that are important to you.

We plan to do this by encouraging the participation of people who share the following characteristics.

- They are seeking to *grow as people*.
- They are seeking to help *build a better world* for everyone.
- They are seeking to *connect beliefs and actions*, so the way they live can increasingly be an authentic expression of their most important beliefs and values.

This community must *offer creative possibilities* which people may want to embrace; it must be a place which encourages our desire to *grow as people* by working together to create a *compelling vision of a realistic and better future*.

There needs to be *some form of membership* which is inclusive and welcoming to anyone who wishes to participate and who shares the aims and values.

There needs to be *two equal, distinct but linked groups*: one for people who are looking to Jesus for their answers, and one for people who are just looking for answers; and the opportunity for people to connect with one other if they choose – in real life, too, when this becomes possible again.

This project needs to *pay its own way*, so it must generate income. This will probably be through a low membership fee from those who are able to pay.

We want all the contributions to *clearly distinguish between facts and opinions* and work towards *a shared understanding of the matters being discussed*.

We want to build a culture which is willing to tackle the *biggest and most difficult challenges* which face us, but do do in a *relaxed and enjoyable* way, not taking ourselves too seriously.