

Relationship: No other way to win Dorking
Psalm 127:1 unless the Lord builds the house, its builder's
labour in vain.

1 John 2:28 - 3:24 (TM)

Over 33 years of ministry the conviction has grown and grown and been borne out by testimony after testimony, that the Body of Christ is first and foremost about relationship. Putting it straight, it's how Churches are built and grow: Psalm 133:1 says where brothers and sisters dwell in unity there the Lord commands the blessing! As I have prayed and considered what the Lord wants me to bring to you in this ministry I have consistently heard Him saying that's its less about what we do and more about who we are. The World, and in our case Dorking, needs to see a community of the redeemed loving Him, loving one another, and in His name, loving every man, women, boy and girl in this town and surrounding area. Relationship would be the how, Love the Key & Grace embodied in the Body of Jesus, the way.

1 Corinthians 3:11 states it in a NT way: For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. The buildings that are Dorking URC may be built with bricks and mortar and set on a cement foundation but at its heart the Body of Christ which is Dorking URC has only one foundation: JESUS. So our foundation is sure, our anchor is firm, if it is purely Christ: not congregationalism, Presbyterianism or any other -ism - no mixed foundation, just Jesus. ***Living Jesus' Love*** is a great strapline: actually doing it needs Holy Spirit and Grace in abundance.

On that Foundation the Lord God can, will and is building His Church today and He chooses to do so in a very specific way, a very human and frail way, a way that was His idea from the start of creation when he said of Adam: It is not good for the man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Relationship! God created

Human Beings not Human Doings: most of us would do much better if we spent more time on being: building relationship, than doing 1001 things, most of which would not stop the world if they were not done!

1. Relationship With God: our supreme task is to have a dynamic relationship with God, which begins with salvation and helps us to grow more like Jesus. Our reading encourages us: we are Children of God! (God has no Grandchildren!). We must stay with Christ and live deeply in Him. Then we will be ready when He appears, ready to receive Him with open arms. Children who share in the glorious inheritance of all the saints, Children who have a birthright (which includes re-digging the wells dug so deeply by John Wesley and others into the spiritual fabric of Nation over the past 300 years), and Children who know the Fathers Embrace, for He has given us the template for all relationship restored.

True God-likeness is not a turn-off but the supreme pinnacle for human beings: Men of God desire it in their women and Women of God in their men. The God-Chasers of this generation have embraced the secret of life in all its fullness! There should not be an ounce of side to the believer: but there is need for a huge dollop of humility, for although we are forgiven we are far from perfect this side of heaven.

Keeping this relationship with God: Father (through prayer, study of the Word, and walking by faith), Son (through absolute trust and obedience in following and making him known) and Holy Spirit (developing fruit, exercising gifts, and letting Him lead) is utterly crucial and the measure to which you and I do this will be the measure to which we are effective in His Service.

Dorking does not need a bunch of Pharisees telling them what to do or a band of elder brothers reacting as party poopers in the prodigal son parable, it needs Jesus and the only way it will see touch and experience Him is through you and me, who call

ourselves the Body of Christ. So water this relationship well with the Restorer & Lover of your Soul daily in the quiet place, on the streets and with your neighbours: just as Jesus made no secret of his relationship with the Father nor should we: a relationship which is demonstrable and true.

2. Relationship with One Another: If our relationship with God were the whole story then we would end up like the early ascetics sitting on top of a pole in the desert meditating on Him or in a monastery or abbey in seclusion praying all day. If it were the whole story then its really: beam me up Scotty as there is no point for us to tarry further in the earth when we can more fully and completely worship and serve Him around heavens throne. But we are saved to serve: and not in isolation like the lone sniper seeking to pick off the enemy from his safe nest. No we are called into relationship with one another: the CHURCH. Suddenly we have in excess of two billion brothers and sisters in Christ, suddenly we have been brought through the Cross back into God's Family, for God's purpose in Psalm 68:6 is to set the lonely in families.

The NT is littered with 'one another's': love one another, encourage one another, confess your sins to.., serve, etc. Someone once said that if believers simply did all these 'one another's' revival would be the outcome for the world would see such a difference in God's people that it would be drawn to Christ as a result. Church is people: forgiven sinners who by grace are being made saints but part of God's way of achieving this is by joining us to each other (Romans 12:5 we belong to each other!). Relationships are like heavenly sandpaper to make us more like Christ, so thank God for the challenge of marriage, the blessing of children, the difficult people he sends across your path, for all and more are to make you more like Christ!

Our passage underlines this relationship: the original message was and is: love one another! (v11). Even to the extent of laying

down our lives for our brothers and sisters (v 16/17) and ensuring that needs are met if we can: no cold shoulders in the Body of Christ! (v16/17). Talking of Shoulders Zephaniah 3:9 describes the revived people of God: "Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve Him shoulder to shoulder".

Our relationship with one another will determine our fruitfulness: God knows nothing of the lone ranger Christian. It will determine how Dorking reacts to us: will they be able to say: See how these Christians love one another? If there is one thing that destroys relationship and that the New Testament clearly labels as sin, its Gossip. Never speak of any believer behind their back: never say anything about another that you are not prepared to say directly to them! I have always dealt with gossip quite simply: by asking the gossip to come with me and say what you are saying to the person! Another thing that is so clearly sin is pride: pride that arrogantly believes their way alone is right and doesn't care who is trodden on in the process of getting there: the Lord will no doubt judge harshly those who have destroyed congregations as a result. We are joined together as the Bride of Christ: pure and spotless is our goal for His Return. We belong to each other, we will be together for all eternity, so lets begin here on Planet Earth that one dynamic life of Jesus together.

3. Our Relationship with the World: If again our relationship with God and each other were the full story we would be a kind of Christian Ghetto: hatches battened down against the big and bad world out there. Such sadly is the attitude of many traditional churches and such is the main reason for their demise. As Jesus reminds us: we are not of the world but we are very much in the world. We are all called to be the light on the hill that cannot be hidden, the yeast into the dough, and

the salt to season. We are all called to be Witnesses to the amazing grace God has bestowed upon us.

We need to relate to those who are not-as-yet Christians not least those in our own households and families. Many Christians seem ashamed of Christ: at least that's the impression they give as they never speak of Him (it leads others to conclude that their confession is not a dynamic one but a dry add on amongst many things vying for first place in their life) We need to spend patient quality time with others gradually opening their eyes to Jesus and His Love. Our lives need to be transparent, an open book for all to see so that what we say is what we do and who we are with no side. They need to see that Jesus is the Centre, the Source, and the Guide: as a modern worship song says.

So often the ethos of Churches has been to focus almost exclusively on the Sunday worship services: everything else is subordinated. However we need a new and biblical paradigm for today's church: Sunday plus small groups, Life Groups (as I call them) plus Messy Church being Church as much as Sunday. Such gatherings can become the filling Station where we refocus on the Lord, receive the renewing power of His Holy Spirit, set Christ on the highest place in worship, and receive from Father His now Word as the Bible is preached and taught to equip us for the task of Mission. This only makes sense if we then serve Him 24/7 in the Mission Field He has given us: be it our workplace, school, neighbourhood, High Street or the called area of ministry we are engaged in. If we don't do this we just become fat with knowledge of God because we have not become doers of the word also.

Our passage underlines this: 'My dear children, let's not just talk about love: let's practice real love' (v18) & v19/20 tell us to

stop the disease of introspection (criticising ourselves constantly) and get on with serving God!

Dorking needs to see Believers involved in every level of its life: political/social/educational/commerce/ etc.etc.

We need to hear the call of God to serve in the many mercy and helps ministries: to the young/elderly/poor/homeless/refugees/asylum seekers etc.

But ultimately our relationship with the World has but one purpose: to introduce people to the Saviour: every believer should be able and deserves to have the thrill of leading another to Christ. And mark my words that if you do, you won't see me muscling in the take the credit: you have helped birth them and you must now nurture and care for them. We are called to be disciples: to be disciples and to disciple others: when you were born physically you were mothered and fathered: so we too must be spiritual mid-wives/husbands and mother/father new believers in Christ: I guarantee that as with the physical experience there is no greater spiritual privilege!!

Conclusion: So this is the Relationship Triangle: one relationship (called being a Christian or a disciple following Jesus) expressed in three ways (Love God, Love one Another, Love the World): all crucial, all demonstrable, all dynamic and real. Such is the Church with the exclusive Jesus foundation the Lord is building today and such a Church will become God's agent of real and lasting transformation in Dorking, on the High Street, and across our town.

I John 3:21-24

Pastor David

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