

...learn from Me the unforced rhythms of grace...

LEARNING *“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”* Matthews 11:28-30

Reflecting - How will I grow in Christian maturity, becoming the person God wants me to be, aided by study, learning new skills and reflection on my daily life?

Talk/Video

I remember reading the adoption papers, the family background - even watching videos of my soon-to-be son and daughter playing in their foster carers’ garden. There was so much information about their family heritage, their likes and dislikes, their schooling and nursery notes that I was lulled into a false sense of believing that I almost knew them. Yet within days – hours, even, of them arriving in my home, it was very clear that I did *not* know these two little beings at all.

I can also recall the very moment when I lifted a little toddler out of her car seat on the driveway and suddenly realised that she wasn’t just a lovely little girl given into my care whom I barely knew; she was now my daughter. *My daughter!* I looked across and smiled at the little boy whose favourite tea I was planning because he was *my* son, and by now I knew him. I knew what he needed, what he wanted, what he liked and disliked and how he might react to anything that might now happen to us as a family. I can still recall the delight and shock on his face when I began to anticipate his likes and dislikes, ‘Mama! How are you reading my mind!’ he used to shout with delight, amazed that anyone cared enough to even notice he was there at all.

But the journey didn’t end there. We are still learning about one another almost six years on, and will be, no doubt, six years hence, because being in relationship with another person causes you not only to learn about them, but to learn about yourself as you see yourself reflected in their eyes, and, at times, adjust accordingly. As we learn and grow we then begin to understand things about the one with whom we are relating in new ways and to relate to others and the world itself differently, too.

It’s exactly the same as learning from Jesus. We cannot do it by simply reading *about* Him, even if we have memorised every word recorded in the Gospels, or read so much history we can almost hear the political upheaval of living in Roman occupied territory. We have to spend time with Jesus in order to truly know Him. In spending time sitting at His feet, as Mary did, we begin to see ourselves reflected in the eyes of the Son of God. We begin to truly know ourselves as well as experiencing ourselves as so beloved of God, we can hardly believe that God Him/Herself can ‘read our minds’, knowing what we need and desire almost before we know it for ourselves. From the security of this wonderful, trusting relationship we grow to become more able to open our hearts to possibility of being known, accepted and transformed by the love of God.

Yet this passage also challenges us – are we willing to gather together to hear the word of God and then to allow others to break open that Word to us, giving us fresh insight? Do we have teachable spirits that are open to seeing things from new perspectives or at the very least, allowing others a different perspective from our own? Have we ever studied theology or read books that would teach us more about the Bible and about God or do we think that’s just for those in up-front ministries? John’s gospel is very clear that ‘the Word became flesh and lived among us’ – ‘among us’ not some, and certainly not just the sacred few. It is this Living Word that still calls us into a living relationship with God, learning more about God’s ways that we might grow in discipleship and loving service as well as in grace and mercy. As we do so might become better known as a peaceful, loving, courageous people willing to engage deeply with the scriptures, theology, cultures and faiths across the world, able to speak wisdom and truth into every organisation we seek to work in partnership with to work for the greater good, as well as challenging unjust structures, including our own.