



Issue 9  
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## Thoughts on Sharing



### Christmas is here!

I know one of the things we talk about at Christmas is giving but this year the word sharing kept coming to me. Giving is great but can be impersonal. You can give someone something this Christmas and leave it with them. I was once given a gorgeous jumper for Christmas and I wore it all the time. However, whenever I saw the person who gave it to me I was never wearing that jumper. After a couple of meetings they asked me if I liked the jumper because they had never seen me wear it. I told them I loved it and I wore it all the time, they just never saw me wear it.

Giving is great, but I think our hearts long to share in something too.

This Christmas what are you sharing and who are you sharing it with? Are you sharing your time? Are you sharing your food? Are you sharing your story? Will you be sharing laughter and joy?

This Christmas how about we don't just give and walk away. How about we share something? How about we make time and share between us the love of God? How about we share our story and the story of Jesus Christ with others?

How about we share love, joy, peace, grace, mercy and forgiveness which has been given to us from God to overflowing. Why to overflowing? So we can share it with someone!

Who will you share with and what will you share this Christmas?

**Pastor Steve**



## Les the Ed

Recently I had a cataract operation on both of my eyes.

A cataract is a clouding of the lens in your eye. As you age, proteins in your natural lens begin to break down and the lens becomes clouded. In simple terms the surgeon removes the old lens and inserts a new one.

Some people don't even realise they have a cataract as it grows very slowly and may not impede vision early on.

After my cataract operations everything looked brighter and I could see more clearly.

**This made me think about our spiritual lives.** If we do not keep our eyes upon Jesus, the light of the world, our spiritual eyes start to become clouded and we do not see things as we should.

It is what some people refer to as THE POWER OF SEEING.

Praise, Worship and the Word are like corrective lenses for our soul, bringing God clearer into view.

In John 8:12 Jesus stated;

***'I am the light of the world.  
Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,  
but will have the light of life.'***

## Josies Picture Shining the Light

A picture of me in the dark holding a torch which I switch on to shine the way. It is unlikely that I would turn it off and hide it just as people approach me so they would stumble in the dark! It is more probable that I would shine the torch for them and assist them in finding their way to safety.

*I am privileged to know the way to Jesus and I should allow His light to shine through me so that others may see it and know the way too. I must never hold back from telling them about Him.*

***"You are the light of the world.  
A city on a hill cannot be hidden.***

***Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.***

***Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.***

***In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."** (Matthew 5:14-16)*

### Coffee Morning Beginnings

My experience of God is that He is a bit of a 'nag'. But immediately as I reflect on that perhaps I am a bit slow to pay attention.

In 2007 I was bringing a friend to Bewdley every week and we would drive down to the river, past Riverside church, to sit and enjoy the view and a chat. Jean had MS and loved to come to Bewdley. Every time we drove past our church these words would go through my mind,

***"What good is a church  
whose doors are always shut".***

This constant 'nagging' resulted that on the 5th July 2007 there was a meeting of 15 ladies from our fellowship that turned out to be the 1st coffee morning. This confirmed to me there was a great hunger in the church to be outward looking.

None of us had realised how ill prepared we were to start coffee morning and there were many hurdles to overcome. The kitchen was small and we realised there were regulations we needed to comply with. We had a few meetings to organise ourselves and the doors were finally OPEN for coffee morning.

Here is a little note I kept from that time that inspired me. It was headed Harvest.

*I love to pour my blessings down in rich, in choicest measure. But like the seed sowing,*



*the ground must be prepared before the seed is dropped in. Yours is to prepare the soil-mine to drop the seed blessing into the soil. Together we share in and joy in the harvest.*

*Spend more time in soil preparing. Prayer fertilises soil.*

There was much to do in preparation. We were short of 'man' power at the beginning and here we should remember Harold Harrison who faithfully joined us and kept us in prayer during his time with us.

There have been highlights and low points over the 10 years that Val Astley, Peter Hewitt and myself headed up coffee mornings. One winter I remember hardly anyone came. However a lady called Lorraine travelled from Tenbury Wells by bus every week to be with us. When she left the area she wrote to tell us 'We had saved her life that winter'. What our God will do for the one.

On another very wet occasion a coach pulled in to the car park containing 50 children. They were on a mission to compare city life with small town life.

## Coffee Morning Beginnings continued

Well dear Peter invited them all in as it was so wet. They stayed and had their lunch with us. Peter of course providing sweets and crisps to round things off!! We then liaised with the museum who took them on for the afternoon. A good time was had by all and we received a lovely letter of thanks for our small town welcome.

Val and I learnt to dread the coaches pulling in! Peter would be on that car park as quick as a flash meeting and greeting and filling the church with total strangers who soon became friends.

We had laughter and tears in equal measure. Prayers were said, food was eaten, drinks were made in abundance and friendships were enriched. Even the local support police officers would pop in for a

chat and a drink. It was a very happy time for us all. There was nothing more satisfying to see, than some of those people turn up for church on a Sunday.

Too many stories to tell but seasons come to an end. As Val and I began to run out of steam God had already got someone in mind to take over from us as Mike and Jan Parkes joined the church. So new beginnings, fresh ideas and **Wednesday Church** was birthed. God is working His purpose out and we must hold lightly those things He gifts us. Is He 'nagging' you about anything? Don't delay. You might miss out on a great blessing.

Liz Craven.



That's me, Les the Ed in 2003.

## Dog Lane Premises

I moved with my wife Jennifer to Stourport when we retired in August 2000. On the second Sunday after our move, on recommendation, we went to St Georges Hall for Riverside Church's Sunday morning service. We were made very welcome at the door by Yoko Kurimoto and later pastor Jason Heron and his wife Lynda. We then found out they all lived on the same estate as us.

A few months later Lynda was chatting to me after the service and mentioned Jason needed some help with administration so I said in passing "If I can help let me know". That afternoon Jason called in and from then on I assisted him when I could.

The elders had been praying with Jason that God would give us a home of our own. Jason felt led to write to the church seeking their commitment should a premises become available. The response was amazing as God touched people's hearts and approximately £50,000 was committed by 27 people towards a deposit.

## Dog Lane Premises continued

Then the snooker hall in Dog Lane (Previously the stables for the George Hotel.) came on the market. Both Jason & Chris felt led to walk around the snooker hall, lay their hands upon the building and asked God to give his people this place to worship Him in.

The building however was sold to a builder who carried out major work adding a 2nd floor in the roof space and turned it into four units with access upstairs through a doorway half way along the narrow road beside the building.

The builder named the building 'The Dog House' and sold it to an entrepreneur Mr Haywood who used the two upstairs units as his offices for his firm Haywood Homes.

Elim & Riverside negotiated in 2003 with Mr Haywood and negotiated a 99 year lease for the two downstairs units.

Much work was then required. Many people come together to work on the interior including installing a suspended ceiling and sound proofing it. Then there was lighting, heating painting etc. Chris & Ralph turned the letters round of the sign at the front from Dog House to God House!

Jason decided he wanted a small basic kitchen in the front hallway opposite the ladies toilets. He and I went to Homebase and purchased a few units.

The next morning we went to start assembling and fitting the units and found water had been flooding down through the ceiling at the Dog Lane end. We went upstairs to Mr Haywood who was in his rear office and unaware of the flood. We

discovered Mr Hayward's staff had left some of the skylights open in their office overnight that end of the building but there had been torrential rain and the water had flooded both floors! We closed the skylights.





## It's a wonderful thing that bible declares we are all made in the image of God:

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness"*

Genesis 1:26:

*"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."* Genesis 1:27:

This is true of all people who walk the earth, not matter what culture, tribe, creed or race we belong to.

There are over 7.8 billion people in the world (as of January 2021). No two of us are alike in every single way, yet we are all made in the image of God - a person lovingly "knit together in their mother's womb" by the creator of all. I think this says something the incredible, unfathomable nature of God; the fact we live in a world of such diversity, and yet we are all image bearers.

In our worship of God then, how we treat others, and how we speak to others matters. James clearly highlights this in his epistle (James 3:9-12):

*With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.*

It is a sobering thought to me that when I curse others, I am cursing those made in God's likeness. This shouldn't be the case. It can be difficult in a world that in large has turned its back on God; but what if with everyone we encounter, we were to see them through God's eyes, as someone made in his image? Would we treat them differently? Would we have more compassion on them? Would we gain more of an understanding of God's heart for them? A desire for the lost, broken, hurt and cast down of this world?

Our worship is not only in songs that we sing, but how we treat others and how we speak of others, no matter who they are, where they are from, or what they have done. We are all image bearers of God. Jesus calls us to love one another, just as He loves us.

***Dan Beadle***

# Laughter

**A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.**

Proverbs 17:22 NIV

Author Barbara Johnson said, 'Laughter is like changing a baby's diaper. It doesn't permanently solve the problem, but it makes things more acceptable for a while.'

One day, comedian/author David Brenner was signing books. A young man handed him a newly purchased copy to be signed and said, 'I want to thank you for saving my life.' Without giving it much thought, Brenner replied flippantly, 'That's okay.' But the young man stood his ground and said, 'No, I really mean it!'

Brenner stopped signing and looked at him. The young man continued: 'My father died and he was my best friend. I loved him and couldn't stop crying for weeks, so I decided to take my own life. The night I was going to do it, I happened to have the television on and you were hosting *The Tonight Show*. I listened to your opening monologue, and the next thing I knew I was laughing hysterically. I realised then that if I was able to laugh, I was able to live. So I want to thank you for saving my life.'

Humbled and grateful, Brenner shook his hand and said, 'No, I thank you.'

The Bible says, 'A cheerful disposition is good for your health.' Experts confirm that laughter boosts your immune system, enhances your memory and learning abilities, relieves tension, slows your pulse rate and blood pressure, releases endorphins that reduce pain, decreases anxiety and stress, puts people at ease, and brings unity. Furthermore, the effect lasts for eight to twelve hours. It promotes emotional healing, and best of all - it's fun.

**That's why laughter is God's prescription for stress!**

UCB Word for Today. 07/11/2020

Did you hear of the guy who  
invented the knock knock joke?  
He won the 'No Bell' prize.

Why can't elephants use computers?  
Because they're scared of the mouse.



## | PRAYER DEVOTION |

When teaching on how to pray Jesus gives us, what we know as

### **The Lord's Prayer**

You'll find this in Matthew 6:9-15.

How about we spend some time together in the Lord's prayer.

Diving into the fullness of how Jesus taught us to pray?

#### Day 1 – Read Matthew 6:9a aloud

“Our Father in heaven,”

Lord, thank you that I am not alone. Thank you for all the people who are in the body of Christ. That we are all your family together. Thank you that I have brothers and sisters in Christ and that I am your child.

Thank you for being my loving Father.

*Spend some time simply giving thanks to god for the other people God has put in your life. Why don't you reach out and encourage some of them today?*

#### Day 2 – Read Matthew 6:9b aloud

“hallowed be your name,”

God, your name is Holy. You are holy. You are always worthy of praise. Forgive me when I have taken you for granted. You deserve our praise and you deserve to be honoured and glorified. Lead me in doing this today.

*Make a space to worship and give thanks for God for who He is. Why don't you write a list and describe what He is like and then give thanks for each word you have described God with. He is great and worthy to be praised!*

#### Day 3 – Read Matthew 6:10 aloud

“your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

God, I want to see your kingdom here today. I want to see your will be done today. Please Lord, speak to me. I give you my day. May your will be done today. Not my will but yours. I give myself to you for your kingdom today.

*Make some space to be still and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in what His will is for you today. Is there anything you need to do for Him? Is there anyone you need to contact? Make a space, be still and respond to Him.*

# | PRAYER DEVOTION |

## Day 4 – Read Matthew 6:11 aloud

“Give us today our daily bread.”

God, you know me better than anyone. You know me more than I know myself. You know all the deepest and darkest places of me. You know my needs more than anyone. Please Lord, be my daily bread today, be all I need. Provide for me God. I need you.

*Share your troubles with God and ask Him for what you need today. Share your heart with God, share your needs and desires, holding nothing back. He wants to hear from your heart what you need. Share it with Him. Ask Him.*

## Day 5 – Read Matthew 6:12 aloud

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Lord, I need your forgiveness. Please forgive me for my sins. But also God help me to forgive others too. I forgive those that have hurt me, please will you bless them wherever they are.

*Spend some time repenting of your sin and asking God for forgiveness. Then spend some time asking God to forgive those who you are still trying to forgive, pray blessings for them and ask God to heal whatever hurts you still have.*

## Day 6 – Read Matthew 6:13 aloud

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Lord, please help me when I am tempted today. Keep me walking on the narrow path. Help me walk the way you call me to walk and please Lord protect me today. Lead me away from being tempted by sin and protect my life today.

*Spend some time sharing with God the areas where you are tempted in life and ask Him to give you strength to not give in to temptation. Ask God to protect your heart and mind from those areas of temptation too.*

## Day 7 – Read Matthew 6: 9-13 – the Lords prayer- aloud

*As you read the Lords prayer do it slowly, pausing at the end of each verse. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you on each verse and lead you in your prayers today as you allow these verses to shape how you pray today.*

## Word from the Lord to Jan Parkes on 19th Oct 2021

For, says the Lord, you have reached an impasse. The world, the church, this church, you as individuals, you have stopped, you are stuck.

But says the Lord, momentum is coming from on high. Small steps, baby steps, tiny steps are coming. You will go forward, you will not go back.

But, do not push, says the Lord, do not try to make it happen. You cannot, because you are stuck. Focus only on Me. Let me push.

Do not be distracted by the things that do not matter, they have no worth. Focus on Me. Let Me be the One who makes it happen, says the Lord.

Only look up, not to the right or to the left, not to yourselves, only look up, I will make it Happen.

Be patient, small steps, baby steps. You must cling to Me, you must cling to your salvation, do not let it go, it is a fragile thing. Look to Me.

There is still some time left in this world, says the Lord, but, eternity is beckoning. I am getting ready. Heaven is waiting to open. I am waiting to reveal My glory. Look up. Do not let your focus wander. Trust Me, cling to Me, cling to your salvation.

Trust Me, My children, let us go forwards together.

Amen.



### Can you read this?

Aoccdnrng to a rscheearch procejt at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosnt mttar waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pcale.



## | Operation Christmas Child |



Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our shoebox appeal this year, whether it has been items for the shoeboxes, filled shoeboxes or finances towards the shipping and distribution costs. Thank you too for your prayers. Many many children and families will be blessed.

Our UK target is to collect and process 350,000 boxes this year. The first lorry has already reached Belarus, and the next one at the end of November will be a container lorry heading for Liberia, and then into Central Asia. Then there will be more....

We will be processing and packing boxes in Oldbury, from November 22nd to December 18th. Pray for more volunteers to help do this.

Please pray for the logistics team, organising the collections of shoeboxes around the country, and then the exporting of the boxes, sending the lorries to Eastern Europe, Central Asia and West Africa.

Pray that these shoebox gifts will be a tool of love for evangelism and assist pastors and local churches to shine the light of Jesus in their communities.

*Thanks, Jacky*

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This is the first lorry this season that left Oldbury in October loaded with 9000 shoeboxes, heading for Belarus.

These boxes are the first shoebox online donations packed this season – packed in faith in August, and now on their Way!!

On November 3rd, I received the news that the lorry had arrived in Belarus!! PTL!!

( I was privileged to help with the packing of these boxes.)



## **Christmas at Riverside**

This Christmas we are doing multiple things at Riverside. We love celebrating Christmas. Why don't you celebrate with us?

### **Something to TALK about...**

Our Sunday morning series is called "Something to TALK about..." and will run on the 5th, 12th, 19th, and 25th of December. The 12th of December will be our Christmas Carol Celebration at St Georges Hall at 6pm (there will be no morning service this day). Who could you invite to join us as we share that this Christmas we have something to talk about...

### **Something to SING about...**

We are taking Christmas on the road again this year. This year it's under the title of "something to SING about..." We will be singing Christmas Carols on people's streets, bringing the joy of Christmas to your community. We released the dates by video and letter this year. If you'd like to know more about us bringing singing carols to your street get in touch with us here at Riverside on 01299 405535 or

### **Christmas Eve in Jubilee Gardens**

Like last year we have been given the opportunity to have a Christmas eve celebration in Jubilee Gardens. Here there will be carol singing and we will share in the Christmas story together at 4pm. It'd be great to have you with us in Jubilee Gardens to celebrate Christmas together.

### **Christmas Hampers**

This year we are able to put together 75 hampers to support families in need, enough to make a Christmas dinner, plus a bit more.

All you need to do is contact us and let us know how many hampers you want and the name of the household who is having them. We need the name of the household so that we don't double up with hampers being given out by Wyre Forest Food Bank.

Pick up date is Tuesday 21st December and we will arrange a time for you to pick it up. The hamper needs to be collected that day as it includes fresh meat and vegetables.

Contact details below via our mobile or email Steve or Liz. Thank you.

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