

Coach House Church BEACONS

HIDE AND SEEK

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You must have played hide and seek when you were younger, or maybe you've played it recently with younger children. You get more creative each time you play, more daring, squeezing into the tightest of places trying desperately to not make a single sound and give yourself away. Unless that is, a very young child is hiding from you! Then you just have to play the game and look in all the places they are obviously not hiding – because that small child is the one not hidden from sight at all, but they do have their eyes closed. And we all know if your eyes are closed then nobody else can see you- can they?

This made me think that:

Sometimes things are hidden in plain sight and Sometimes the plain sight just doesn't make any sense to us. This also links in with a comment that was made in a recent discussion. Somebody said that the bible was a bit like hide and seek. You have to look for clues. Some of the message is hidden and you don't see it at first. I thought this was a brilliant description. There are times when the thing you are looking at or listening to just doesn't make sense.

There are times when working out something for yourself gives you greater satisfaction, when you have to work at it to solve a problem or work out a solution. In one of my lessons, at school, we had a brilliant maths teacher who started off at the beginning of the first lesson asking us a question. We hadn't got a clue of the answer. The question didn't even make sense. However he encouraged us all to give an answer to this impossible question and said if we still didn't know what to say, then, say 13. So we responded with '13' and he said 'wrong'. This process continued with further questions, and guess what, we began to see a pattern emerging between the question and answer. Eventually, after a few attempts of '13' and 'wrong again' we all worked out the solution. It took some time but the strategy worked.

One person who took the approach of taking time to work things out was a man called Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee, a Jewish religious leader, who came under the cover of darkness to talk to Jesus without anyone else around. At first, you may think, well he was a bit sneaky, or was he a coward, not willing to speak up in public. But, in fact he was not satisfied with the legalism of his fellow Pharisees who would have nothing to do with this radical preacher. Nicodemus grew disturbed and confused by the words that Jesus was preaching and needed to clarify certain truths that applied to his life and circumstances. And so, he summoned his courage to seek out Jesus and ask questions.

Although he had a position of responsibility, as a religious teacher, he clearly had a long way to go in his understanding of Jesus' teaching.

John 3 says: 10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?"

However, later, when Jesus was arrested, Nicodemus spoke out boldly, and John 7 says: 51 "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?" It seems clear from this response that he understood who Jesus was and how inadequate was the law he was guided by.

The dedication of Nicodemus, and his change of attitude towards Jesus, is further proved in John 19:

38 Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. 39 He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.[e] 40 Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

Nicodemus approached Jesus in secret, hidden from the view of others, but left understanding that Jesus was the Messiah, worthy to be treated as Royalty.

This tells us that sometimes we don't get it, we don't understand but, that's alright. It's what we do with our lack of understanding that is important.

A great teacher I worked alongside for some years used to encourage the class to respond honestly when she taught a new concept. She would ask the class: 'Is it as clear as crystal or is it as clear as mud?' Sometimes we just can't grasp what is being explained or described and we just have to admit 'I just don't know'.

Nicodemus was brave enough to ask the questions so that the answer to his question 'How do I become born again?' was as clear as crystal. John 3 verse 16 explained:

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Another example of hidden messages comes in the parables that Jesus told the crowds of people that followed him. In Matthew 13 Jesus explains to the disciples that the parables can be understood by people whose hearts and minds are open to the things of God. Some are not ready to listen, to see, to work out the meaning so they appeared to be hidden.

In Matthew 11 Jesus said: 25 "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

It's good to know that understanding the promises of the bible isn't determined by a vast knowledge, profound learning or innate intelligence. The message is simple enough that a young child can grasp it so it can be found and understood by everyone. God loves us but can't allow us into heaven because we're not perfect and only perfect things can be in the presence of an Almighty God. Jesus died, taking our sins, our imperfections and mistakes on himself. We confess our sins and ask for forgiveness, recognising we are not worthy to be anywhere near God. Now Jesus stands between us and God so that God sees the perfect sacrifice of Jesus instead of our sin. God welcomes us to spend eternity with him and promises to be with us through his Holy Spirit living inside us while we remain on earth.

In the Old Testament, the place to worship God was to visit the Temple and before that the Tabernacle, the tent of meeting. The entrance to this holy place was a series of courtyards with boundaries and barriers between each level. Each courtyard was designated for a different group of people and you were not allowed to enter the inner sanctuary-the holy of holies unless you were the Priest and then only at particular times, following precise rules of cleanliness and holiness. There was overt discrimination against women and gentiles, that is non-Jews, with only Jewish males being allowed into the inner courts.

Yet, now there is no discrimination as it says in Ephesians 2:13

Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. 14 For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

The Glory of God, present in the Holy of Holies was hidden from all but the Priest. Yet, through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross the way to God is no longer hidden. Part of the dramatic revelation of God's power, when Jesus was on the cross, was to

tear the temple curtain from the top to the bottom. This ripping apart of the barrier signified that God was no longer hidden and was now accessible through Jesus. In the Old Testament you could only draw near to God when you had completed rituals for cleansing and holiness. Jesus changed the process and now through belief and trust in him, through confession and forgiveness for our sins, we stand in Jesus righteousness, presented to the Father by Jesus himself.

Hebrews 10:19 begins

19 And so, dear brothers and sisters,[f] we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. 20 By his death,[g] Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. 21 And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, 22 let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

We don't have to play hide and seek with God. He has made the way possible to meet him through his son Jesus. We just have to call out to Him and He will answer.



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