

One of the most destructive forces which has caused havoc in the Christian church throughout the centuries is the intriguing little Greek word, goggusmos. In the Greek language as in English it was an onomatopoeic word, which means that it sounds like what it describes. The usual English translation is ‘grumble’ or ‘mutter’, or in old English ‘murmur’. Imagine going into a room where there is a not quite understandable rumbling sound coming from one corner. The looks on the faces of those in the group tell you the conversation is not for your ears, and it may even be about you.

Jesus was frequently the target of grumblers who were sometimes religious people,(Lk.5:30; Jn.6:41,43) or the crowd who gathered to listen to Him.(Jn.7:12, 32) But the grumbling could even come from His disciples.(Jn.6:61) Grumbling happened when His actions or words did not fit their expectations. Jesus used the word Himself to describe the complaint of the workers in the vineyard who had labored all day but were only paid the same as the group who worked just one hour.(Matt.20:11) Their expectations were higher despite receiving exactly what the owner had promised. Sometimes as in Acts 6:1 grumbling was the result of assumed inequality between the two ethnic groups among the Jewish Christians. Prejudice rather than reality commonly underlies grumbling.

The New Testament writers recognized how easily grumbling arose and how damaging it could be. Paul warned that it could switch off ‘the light of the world’ in our lives.(Phil.2:14) Peter was aware that hospitality could be spoiled when we grumble about the mess our guest has left in the bathroom.(I Pet.4:9) Jude foresaw grumbling as a major issue in coming judgement.(Jude 16) When Paul wrote First Corinthians he was dealing with a church full of grumblers who criticized each other, their leaders and even Paul behind his back. He compared them,(I Cor.10:10) to the Israelites who grumbled their way across the Sinai desert muttering to each other about incompetent leadership from Moses and Aaron. Inevitably the real target was God Himself who was very well aware of what was going on in the privacy of their tents.( Exod.15-17; and Num.14-17) The Lord decided that there was no place for grumblers in the Promised Land, where believers would enjoy God’s best. There is still no place for muttering in the Christian church if we are to be the force in the world God intends.

Moses also complained, but his was healthy complaining because he always did it to God and to God alone. David did the same often, which is why the Psalms are part of God’s word. Both Moses and David recognized that they had only one boss, the Lord Himself. If we have a problem at work, we should tell the boss not our fellow workers. Paul emphasized repeatedly at the beginning of his letters that he was called and sent by God, not a committee, and therefore when times were tough he told the Lord how he felt. Even Jesus complained once, but it was to the right person, His Father, when from the cross He cried, ‘My God why have You forsaken me?’

How is everything going at Fowey Lodge? We have no complaints but if we had we are not telling you! Wonderful things happen in people’s lives when the Truth is explained. We have seen many examples in the last year of people changing, sometimes quickly but often gradually over weeks or months. Bible school continues to be the heart of what we are called to do. Numbers in classes are not large but enthusiasm and openness to learn is high. Our team of teachers continue to be very faithful. John Clayton has finally stopped after 12 years, moving to a retirement village in Matamata though we cannot imagine him sitting with his

feet up. His clear passionate teaching will not be forgotten. Will Harvey is our newest lecturer sharing Monday evening with Eugene. We are thrilled to have him. We have always seen word of mouth, not advertising, as the way to draw new students. We do appreciate those of you whose mouths have been effective in this way.

Bringing students from developing countries has proved increasingly difficult in the last few years so we have moved towards a greater use of internet. Our website is being redesigned to be more reliably accessible and should soon be functioning at a better level. Our plan is to have more and more studies on line. At present 54 Bible books are being offered this way. For several years we have been developing a series of Certificate and Diploma courses. Initially they were for the pastors in Uganda working with John Wandera but then they were taken up by leaders in Zambia and later in India and Pakistan. Our dream is not just to have individual students who may not realistically be able to come to NZ but that each would draw a group of friends and neighbours around them to share the studies together. As we become better in the use of internet our hope is to make videos of lectures available probably on YouTube and also to develop discussion forums to support those who are studying remotely. Jane Freeman has recently offered her help with the administrative work needed to support online study. We really value the difference she is making.

We have often shared our concern for children in Uganda who are orphans because of HIV/AIDS. As a fellowship we have supported for some 10 years about 70 orphans in loving families to provide them with education, medical care, basic needs, but above all spiritual care. This ministry continues to be fruitful although there are always ways we could improve. Thank you to those who are sponsors with us. In the last year we have taken up similar projects with 90 children in Andhra Pradesh in South India, and 60 near Lahore in Pakistan. These children are not necessarily orphans but live in desperate poverty. The same kind of programme is needed first for their very survival and then to have any hope of lifting them out of the cycle of hopelessness. Each programme is built around past Fowey Lodge students who believe they are called to make a difference. There have recently been a number of garage sales to support the Indian and Pakistani kids in which some of you have helped us. Thank you so much.

In August Nick, Chris and I with several others went to Fiji for a Christian medical outreach in remote villages on the island of Vanua Levu. We worked alongside a Fijian team who did a great job of combining spiritual and practical help. I saw about 300 patients in five days, many of whom had major problems the Fijian health service cannot afford to fix. Nick and his friends were also able to do some maintenance at Muanicula, our property near Savu Savu which continues to minister to families. Somewhere a mosquito got me and I developed dengue fever a few days after returning which has taken quite a time to get over. This month we had an immensely moving visit from Songe Chibambo from African Enterprise who described what Christ is doing in cities all over Africa in evangelism, supported by practical aid, reconciliation and leadership training. Our hope is to take a team to Africa in the coming year to share in what they do.

Nick's Masters thesis is nearly complete. The finishing line is in sight! The commitment it has demanded has hindered him getting to Taihoa but there are big plans now for a camp programme in January, starting on 4<sup>th</sup> January. Over the next few weeks there is a large task to clean up and prepare for the summer. And then what? There are lots of dreams... Pete has lived his dream this year in Turangi as a volunteer with the fire service as well as with St

John's Ambulance. His decision now is to apply to be a full time fire fighter. So we will all be safe!

We receive lots of e-mails, letters, phone calls, newsletters and visits from many of you and always enjoy them even if we do not always manage to answer. But remember, don't complain- except to God!

Our love in Christ

Tony Chris Nick and Pete