

Some ladies are upset because God is always referred to in the Bible as 'He'. Surely they say God is not male only is He? Why not sometimes call God 'She', they ask? A long time friend agreed with this plan as long as they would also refer to the Devil as she! The debate was then dropped. But there is good news for these ladies who feel discriminated against.

I have recently been studying the book of Proverbs to teach it systematically for the first time. I am making a startling discovery. Solomon, reputed to be the wisest man in history until the coming of Jesus consistently refers to wisdom as she!(Prov.1:20) Sometimes, as in this chapter, the woman Wisdom is a mother calling her children from the street before they get themselves into trouble. At other times she is a faithful wife who will guard, watch over us and honour us.(Prov.4:6-9) In other places wisdom is a big sister and friend looking out for younger siblings, again warning them of the temptations of the world outside the safety of home. (Prov.7:4)

At the same time we should be aware of how Solomon warns his son that there are two women out and about in the town. As well as wisdom who could be his loving wife, there is Folly, the harlot or adulteress whose mission is to lead him astray. Wrong teaching is also a woman who lures us with outward attractiveness but will destroy us if we follow her.

Elsewhere in the Bible, fathers are urged to teach their sons.(Deut.4:9,10; Eph.6:4)) Why did this instruction have to be repeatedly given to fathers? Is it just the role of a father to be the teacher? Mothers do it anyway! It is fathers who need to be reminded. Who taught us to clean our teeth, wash behind our ears, make our beds and do the dishes? From whom did we learn traditional sayings, 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.' 'A stitch in time saves nine.' Our mothers! My father was a hugely important figure in my early life but it was my wonderful mother who lamented the fact that she had never been able to teach me common sense. In Solomon's upbringing it appears that it was both parents, David and Bathsheba, working as a team who sought to prepare him for life as the future king.(Prov.1:8)

God, He, and wisdom, she, are a superb combination who can bring us up to be mature sons and daughters of God. Some people insist that a relationship with God by any name, like the Higher Power of Alcoholics Anonymous, is what matters. But they lack content. Wisdom provides that content so that there is real depth to our faith. Others promote the value of wisdom alone, but this becomes an academic exercise without a life-giving relationship with our Creator and Redeemer.

Which brings us to great crisis of our modern world. Kids need two parents, him and her, in the same place at the same time, and deeply in love with each other. Solo parenting is tough, even with some support from a new partner, but the children struggle most. Crime, alcohol, drugs, promiscuity, mental illness culminating in suicide are epidemic and very closely related to what went wrong in the lives of their parents. Behind this social tragedy is the other woman called Folly, the denial of God's plan right from Creation that a man and a woman should come together as one, and stay together for life.

Life at Fowey Lodge continues to be an adventure in which the Lord brings into our lives all kinds of people many of whom have been hurt by their own mistakes or the folly of others

often a generation or more ago. What is always exciting is that they are also those hungry for change and longing to have something, or rather Someone, to offer so that the future can be different for their families, friends, and neighbours. Having the freedom to teach God's wisdom day after day to whomever comes is an unbelievably rich privilege. Our lecturing team are an amazing bunch most of whom have stuck with us for years. At the same time when there is a gap someone new and gifted turns up willing to fill it. At the present time all our accommodation is full and sometimes overflowing.

Taihoa, Nick's little farm in the stunningly beautiful Waioeka Gorge near Opotiki, was the setting as usual for three great summer camps for young people. The new deck on the outside of the cabin became a real feature for eating, relaxing and teaching. The weather some of the time was a challenge when the rain caused the river to rise but in the end it did not matter to the kids who had the capacity to enjoy themselves in sunshine and cyclone! The feedback we received indicates that God works in young hearts in all weathers. We have been doing some serious thinking about the future of Taihoa. Should we continue there? Is it just for summer camps? More and more we are drawn to the idea of it being a place where damaged people can see God put life together again. We know there is huge potential but as a family we cannot do this by ourselves. If you have any sense of call to join with us, please let us know.

Our commitment to helping orphans from HIV/AIDS in the ministry in Uganda led by John Wandera, and children in desperate poverty in Andhra Pradesh in South India under the care of Jampani Babu, and those in virtual slavery near Lahore in Pakistan whom Habib Sadiq is seeking to help, continues. Sponsorship of the children grows slowly. We would love it to be faster. Contact Christine on christinehanne@clear.net.nz for Uganda, or Albert on albert.ruijne@woosh.co.nz for India and Pakistan, if you want to join with us. If you have any opportunity to visit one of these three countries to offer some practical help you would be enthusiastically welcomed.

Nick is based most of the time at the Lodge and is now well into his Masters in Political Studies. It has been great to have him deeply involved in the teaching programme. Pete after finishing his diploma at the Outdoor Pursuits Centre in National Park has stayed on in Turangi to pursue his passion for emergency rescues. He is working in an appliance store to support himself while helping and training with both the Fire Service and St John's Ambulance, as well as being available for Land Search and Rescue. He is working towards qualification in all of these areas and is just beginning to explore another long term dream to train as a helicopter pilot with the ultimate aim of using that also in rescue. He has been involved in a whole series of dramatic and sometimes tragic situations in the mountains, the bush and on the roads.

Our Bible conference in February was well attended and seemed to catch people's imagination with the title 'Who stole our village?' asking what has gone wrong in our communities and how as Christians we can help. The next one will be in August most likely on Saturday, 11th or 18th but we will let you know nearer the time a firm date and topic.

We love your letters, e-mails, phone or Skype calls or even real live visits. We do care about how life is for you. We are not always great at replying...

Our love in Christ,

Tony, Chris, Nick and Pete