

Today, 24th November, is my 60th birthday! Those of you who know me well will be doubtful. It is what is known these days as an 'alternative fact'. Let me explain. Sixty years ago today, (as a young man of 20), I made a scientific experiment. I said 'God, if you exist, if the Bible is true, if Jesus Christ is your Son, if He died on the cross for my sin, if He rose from the dead and if He can live in me, please do it right now.' The experiment worked! He came into my life. Now I knew. God is alive. I am clean, forgiven. The Bible is exciting. Christ lives in me. And those certainties have remained, and got better and better over 60 years. I have no complaint. It was the best birthday ever.

How much has the world changed in 60 years? In one respect nothing is different. Look at the news on TV or the newspaper, or Facebook. It is all about two things, love and hate, whether between nations or within families. Why? The Apostle John spelled it out beautifully for us in I John chapter 4. The chapter ends by explaining why some people hate their brothers. To understand where this comes from and therefore the only cure, we need to trace his message from the beginning of the chapter. There is a simple choice in whom we listen to whether the Spirit of God and or other spirit(v.1). The Holy Spirit's teaching centres on Jesus, the Man in the New Testament, Who was also the Son of God, the Christ, promised throughout the Old Testament(v.2). Other spirits deny this and offer alternatives(v.3). The Spirit insists that if we know this we can overcome (v.4). But overcome what? The Spirit of truth insists that we can love one another(v.7). The spirit of error says we cannot. Who is right?

It all depends on Whom we know. If we know God we can love as He does because He is love(v.8). And if we do not know Him we cannot love. It is as simple as that. Great, but how can we know Him? By being born of Him, which is what happened to me on my first birthday. When we are born of Him He comes to live in us(v.9). His kind of living is recognisable by one characteristic above all else, love. But Jesus living in us is not like a casual visitor who drops in for a coffee when we invite him. He abides in us(v.12). He wants to be regarded as a lifelong resident who is always totally welcome in every aspect of our lives, every problem and every relationship. In fact He does not just want to be a welcome resident but the owner-occupier of His own house, our bodies. Every moment of every day He will be our Saviour, if we let Him(v.14). It all starts with our recognition of Who Jesus is which depends on which Spirit is teaching us(v.15). Agreeing with Him is believing in Him(v.16).

But why is it so hard to love people? Because of their judgement of us(v.17). They disapprove, or we think they do. It may be our gender, age, race, accent, politics, theology, appearance, actions, words or lack of them. And so we fear them. Fear is the basis of hatred. To replace hatred with love we need to overcome fear. Real love, the love of God and fear are totally incompatible. So truth about God leads to being born of God, which means we know Him, which is expressed in loving as He does, which in turn is fearless, which eliminates hatred and replaces it with the love of God. Which is what I started to learn 60 years ago! Wow, what a journey!

Talking of birthdays, on 2nd November we became grandparents again for the second time. Nick and Tracey, our daughter-in-law, became the parents of Sienna and all is going wonderfully well for them, and for Eva, who is delighted to be the big sister.

And still on the subject of children, we remain deeply committed to helping our past students to provide for needy young people. We have often written to you about John and Jesca Wandera in Uganda who are still organising the support of over 450 children in Uganda, most of them orphans

now being cared for by families. \$35 per month helps to keep them in school, clothe them, and ensure medical care, undergirded by caring Christian communities. The problem for many of those who have been supported for up to 17 years is that unless their care goes on to allow tertiary training they will end up unemployed. Sponsors from NZ and Australia have been incredibly faithful but may have to give up after a number of years. It is much harder to find new sponsors for those past our normal school leaving age than it is for 5 year olds. John visited us a few months ago and shared a deeply moving story of how well so many of these young people are doing.

Alfred Nsofwa in Zambia came to Bible School about 25 years ago and has had a very similar ministry planting churches and placing orphans in Christian families. Again we try to send help to him on a regular basis and we would love others to join us.

Jampani in Andhra Pradesh, South India, trains pastors using our on-line programme but is also involved in the care of close to 100 children in desperately needy circumstances. While they live with their own predominantly Hindu parents they do so in terrible poverty where a family lives on one acre of rice paddy. They lack food, shelter, shoes, health care and education. They come to the school Jampani runs hungry and sick. Before he and his team can feed their minds, they need to feed their stomachs, and even more to feed their souls with God's word.

Habib in Pakistan faces a comparable situation with some 60 children of indentured labourers, in effect slaves, for whom the only hope of escape from being another generation trapped in the same humanly hopeless circumstances is at least a basic education. They too need feeding in every sense. Habib also uses our programme to train pastors who work in considerable danger.

By comparison we assume young people in NZ live in heaven. Nothing could be further from the truth. So many are caught up in families wrecked by alcohol, drugs, crime, violence, unfaithfulness and abuse and are as needy as those in Africa or South Asia. For many years we have run Water Weeks, youth camps involving water in some form. Thousands of young people have been part of our programmes over many years. In the last several years since grandchildren started to arrive we, together with Nick, have had to limit our camps but we have not stopped and still remain as excited as ever about what God can do through this means. Surprisingly the young people assure us we are not too old to run camps. We are planning another camp this January from 5-8th with the help of Asbjorn and Sue Widvey and their family at Mangakino near Taupo. With canoes, water skis and speed boats and a beautiful lakeside setting it is a place we have much enjoyed. Let us know by e-mail or phone if you have kids and their friends who are keen.

Which brings us back to Bible school at Fowey Lodge. In partnership with Nick and Tracey and our great team of teachers we are wanting to take a new initiative in short term Bible training primarily for young people, with the emphasis on Christ and His grace throughout the Bible with Him as our Teacher, on servant leadership, on reaching out with His love worldwide and on the marvellous sense of God's family when we get beyond rules and traditions. The new term will open on Monday, 12th February. Let us know if you want a timetable e-mailed to you. We want you to help us find and encourage a new generation whom God can use to make a difference in a world to which Christ is increasingly unknown and they suppose, irrelevant. Our Bible school breakup for 2017 will be on Saturday, 16th December starting with a barbecue at 6pm. Come and celebrate with us!

We want to hear from you and to help you in every way we can.

Our love in Christ

Tony and Christine