

Fowey Fables – No.27 September 2011

When Nehemiah heard news of his ancestors' broken down city, he was devastated. But Jerusalem did not just have broken walls. It was also suffering from broken morale. It was a broken society. Nehemiah wisely acknowledged that they first had a spiritual problem, his problem as much as everyone else's.(chap.1) He sought both authority and resources from the king, promising to return after a given time.(chap.2) Jesus received authority and all the grace and power He needed for His task from the King of Heaven, knowing He would return to heaven when the job was done. Nehemiah like Jesus came to see for himself, gathered a small group of helpers and invited them to join him in the work. The message spread and many people from all walks of life willingly joined in the task of rebuilding.(chap.3) But the enemy was first displeased, then increasingly angry and finally prepared to murder, as the three fold enemy of the work of Christ, the Devil, the flesh and the world, would later be out to destroy first Jesus and then His church. Because Nehemiah armed his team as Jesus arms us with the scriptures, the sword of the Spirit, the enemy failed.(chaps.4 and 6)

The task of restoring the broken city included meeting the practical needs of the poor,(chap.5) so that every one of God's people knew they belonged to Him,(chap.7) as well as meeting their spiritual needs by teaching right through the scriptures.(chap.8) When the people of Jerusalem responded wholeheartedly to the word of God,(chap.9) their whole society began to change towards the plan God had for them.(chap.10) As they continued to grow in the word, the revolution in their community penetrated deeper and deeper.(chaps.11-13) Nehemiah's name means 'compassion of the Lord', and was the secret of his huge motivation. Jesus is the expression of the love of God in action. His compassion in us will be our driving force.

Chris, Nick and I are in Fiji this week, contributing to a conference planned by GSL, Godly Servant Leadership, led by Rig Reddy, a student at the Lodge, and an old friend from the late '60s. The planning group in Suva drew together leaders of today from many walks of life, and leaders of the future, who really want to rebuild their troubled society in a Christ-like way. What is exciting is how they recognise this means both Christ-centred Bible teaching, and practical aid and skill development. Our part is to offer help in both ways, in Bible teaching and in improving the desperately under-resourced medical system.

Back at the Lodge we have enjoyed a three week visit from Habib Sadiq, the pastor who organised Nick's and my visit to Pakistan last November. Many people appreciated meeting him and hearing more about his plans for his country, which we enthusiastically support, for Christian leadership training as well the sponsorship of kids from families trapped in indentured labour, modern day slavery.

We have shared before a similar dream in Andhra Pradesh in South India, led by Jampani, another past student, to combine pastors' training with child sponsorship in one school of 90 kids

among remote rice paddies. This hope is beginning to gain momentum. The whole plan seemed threatened a few weeks ago when there was no money to pay the teachers and a cyclone blew large holes in the thatched roof of the school. Some compassionate people have been God's means of providing for the teachers and a new roof. Child sponsors are beginning to commit to regular help – but heaps more are still needed.

John Wandera's work in Uganda is still growing. Some 300 children are now being sponsored from NZ and Australia. A lovely group of pastors continue to want more material for their training programme, and there is every indication that their knowledge of Christ is blossoming. The main multi-purpose building in Mbale now has a roof and windows and is near to being usable. God's provision for this has blown us away.

Please let us know if you want to be part of any of these projects. Following our last Fowey Fables there has been a very moving plea from past students in Myanmar, 'Would you be able to help our orphans too..?'

Bible School at the Lodge is still alive and well. We have had a steady flow of new students from the local community, one of whom described Fowey Lodge as 'a well kept secret'! Not quite what we had in mind. For the first half of the year we had four fine new Korean students, three of whom are pastors. We are still struggling with NZ Immigration who cut short their time by refusing to recognise the value of Bible study as a legal activity for overseas visitors. This has driven us to challenge those who make such policies in Wellington to reconsider. We are hopeful of a change of heart in coming weeks. Nehemiah had opposition too and did not let it distract him or discourage him from his task.

A couple of weeks ago we held our 4th Bible conference which seemed to be enthusiastically appreciated by those who joined us. The hope is that the excellent teaching given by our lecturing team will bring a response of the heart and a quiet transformation of lives. The next one will be in February.

We missed Frank Hutchinson's usual wise, heartfelt contribution to the programme. He has had several weeks in hospital, including surgery, and is only now slowly recovering. We know he is in the Lord's hands.

Nick has spent most of the last few months with us in Auckland in the first part of a Masters' degree, which is going well. His time at Taihoa, his farm in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, has been inevitably intermittent. Some good friends have helped to care for the property at times. Now Spring is here our hope is to be down there more often getting the place ready for summer camps. Various groups are talking about coming for weekend visits in the next few months. Let Nick know on nickjhanne1982@hotmail.com if this appeals to you and your friends. This year's Snow Camp at Cardrona between Queenstown and Wanaka was the best ski camp ever according to those who came – perfect snow, a brilliant place up on the mountain to stay and a message which spoke to their hearts.

Pete's Outdoor Education Instructors' course is nearly finished. He has spread himself between the course at OPC and being a volunteer fire fighter at Turangi. His NZ Bravery Medal was a huge encouragement to him that risking his life for others in danger is what he wants to do with his future. The investiture at Government House, and the reception at the Beehive afterwards at which he gave an impressive 5 minute speech, made an unforgettable day for us as a family. His recent 21st birthday was the party of the decade.

Are we thrilled with our sons? Yes, we are.

At the beginning of the year, Chris and I dreamed of being in the UK in the next few days for the 50th anniversary reunion of those who graduated with me. In the end it was just not possible. The great compensation is that I will remember my class as the beautiful, energetic visionaries they were – rather than having to see the ravages of 50 years. Hopefully this will also be their memory of me.

Keep expecting God to do the impossible in our broken societies despite the worst the enemy can throw at us.

Our love in Christ

Tony, Chris, Nick and Pete