

### ***FOWEY FABLES NO.37***

Since the very beginning of the Lodge we have talked about Christian Leadership Training. I still remain passionately convinced that this is God's calling to us. But what is it? We have lived through a whole generation in which leadership training was big news (and usually big business!) Is that our task but with a Bible in one hand instead of the latest 'How to succeed best-seller'?

I have been looking again in recent times at one of the greatest examples of Christian leadership training in the Bible in the story of Saul of Tarsus. A number of people played key roles. The first to be named was Stephen who began his service by providing widows with food.(Acts 6:5) He was also a powerful but gracious Bible teacher who preached himself into martyrdom when he was stoned to death under the supervision of Saul. His final words were a prayer for his killer's forgiveness.(Acts 7:60) His memory would have haunted Saul's dreams until the day he finally met Jesus for himself on a mission to Damascus to wipe out the Christians there. He was not actually converted until Ananias, at first reluctantly, allowed himself to be sent by the Lord to teach him how his sin could be washed away and how he could receive the Holy Spirit.(Acts 22:16 and 9:17)

After an initial period of leaping into action as a disciple of Jesus and some time studying the Bible on his own in the Arabian desert,(Gal.1:17) Saul found his way to Jerusalem assuming the church there would welcome him. The Jerusalem Christians only remembered what he had been before and avoided him. His third leadership trainer began a role which would last for years. Joseph the Encourager, Barnabas, (Acts 4:36) recognised who Saul was now and began to integrate him into the Jerusalem church. Again Saul's huge enthusiasm for the gospel meant he was soon heading for trouble. Barnabas and the other leaders sent him back home to Tarsus to spend time revisiting his family and discovering who he had now become.

It was about 5 years later before Barnabas now teaching an exciting new church in Antioch went to Tarsus to look for Saul to invite him to join him in his new ministry. As far as we can gather Saul became not the Junior Pastor but a fellow servant working beside Barnabas.(Acts 11:25,26) After a year of daily teaching, the new team were sent by the Antioch Christians to help needy Christians in Jerusalem with a generous gift and a willingness to teach those facing hard times. Soon after, back in Antioch, they were sent together by the Holy Spirit and the church as overseas missionaries, first to Cyprus, a Mediterranean island not far away, but with no idea what was next.(Acts 13:1-4)

Barnabas and Saul set out to begin their mission. Soon there was a subtle shift as they began to be described as Paul and Barnabas.(Acts 13:42,43,46,50) Had Paul been promoted or had he seized the top job? On the contrary Barnabas happily encouraged Paul to take the speaking lead to which God had called him, and enjoyed his own role as his willing supporter. Later they returned to Antioch where they had to deal with a major problem of legalistic teaching incompatible with the message of grace they had both proclaimed so effectively.(Acts 15:1-35) They were still a great team who stood side by side and prevailed.

Was their training experience perfect? Not exactly! By the end of chapter 15 both were planning to train other young leaders. Paul unwisely assumed that his call to return to the new churches they had been used to launch would also be a call to Barnabas to join him. For perhaps the first time in their relationship they fell out, rather loudly, and went their separate ways. God knew what He was doing because the outcome was two teams not just one. Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus and

Paul and Silas to Galatia.(Acts 15:36-41) Later they were reconciled.(Col.4:10) Their willingness and ability to do so was another important message for the young people they trained.

At the beginning of December we joyfully ended the 50th year of Bible school at the Lodge and thanked God for His faithfulness and provision as He always has. Every year has been different and special. I still remember the start of the first school when Leonard Van Dooren came out from England to share his huge experience and get me started. He was a wonderful example of a humble servant of God who taught me that the Lord was my Teacher. He was not into big glamorous meetings. Every summer back in England he would load up his car with thousands of leaflets which he had written himself and had translated into various Mediterranean languages and work his way through many villages in southern Europe handing his leaflets to anyone he met, praying that what he had written would speak to them in their own language. He was God's means of helping thousands of young people towards effective Christian leadership.

One of those who surprised us by turning up for the end of year break-up was John Watton from Canada who came as a student in 1981 and has had a great ministry in Africa and elsewhere. A few weeks ago we farewelled a delightful family who have been with us for the past few months. Asaua and Michelle Tiatia and their four children have returned to Ethiopia to continue their work of the last 4 years, rehabilitating prostitutes and caring for needy children. They have been an inspiring example of servants of God who depend wholly on Him for their instructions and provision.

A couple of months ago we had a return visit from Stephen Lungu of Malawi who was touring the country on behalf of African Enterprise, an evangelistic fellowship working in many African countries. He tells a powerful story of how the Lord changed him from a gang leader and then a terrorist into someone responsible for many thousands finding Christ.

We have shared with you a number of times before the work of Jampani Babu in South India. He started a school for children from desperately poor village families to give them a basic education but above all to introduce them to Jesus. Their school day begins with breakfast because many of them are malnourished and won't learn much with an empty stomach. Recently Jampani had felt the school might have to close for a year because of a lack of funds but the Lord has provided enough to keep them going for the present although every month continues to be a struggle. Let us know if you want to help.

We have recently joined the 21<sup>st</sup> century. June-Ann and Tracey are running a Facebook page to keep everyone who wants to know what we are up to in touch. You can find it under Fowey Lodge Bible School. They would love your input and feedback.

We planned to join our good friends Asbjorn and Sue Widvey for another summer camp in Mangakino from 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> January for those aged 8-17 years. As we were travelling down we received devastating news which we thought would ruin the camp. Asbjorn had come off a jet-ski, fractured his ribs and punctured his lung and so was in hospital. Wonderfully a number of people including Nick and Pete stepped in to help and we had a brilliant camp. Asbjorn is steadily recovering.

On the last Sunday of January we had some heartbreaking news. Vipul Kharat, who had lectured at the Lodge on and off for over 10 years, had died suddenly during a ministry trip to India. He was

only 52 years old. His funeral a week later was huge because so many people from so many nations had been blessed by knowing and learning from Vipul. It was one of those times when we wondered why the Lord let it happen. The answer is already becoming clear as so many of those he had encouraged were beginning to say, 'it looks now like God has a job for me!' We all felt very deeply for his wife Suzanne and his 11 year old son.

Our new term of Bible school began on 15<sup>th</sup> February. As always we want all those God sends who really want to know Him better to join us whether they live in or locally and can attend part time of full time. Ask God to prompt you about whom to tell.

As a family we are seeing some exciting developments. Nick has started training this year as a secondary teacher but is still very much involved in the ministry at the Lodge and with a local youth group. Pete is in the process of returning home after his years in Turangi to help us with management. He has gained huge experience and we believe now has much to offer.

We trust you had a great Christ-filled Christmas and now a thrilling new year.

Our love in Christ

Tony, Christine, Nick and Tracey