



Dear Fellow Eagles,

Greetings from the UK! I hope you are feeling blessed and encouraged as you navigate your present relationship with 'church'.

In the last email, I wrote about Jesus' command to 'make disciples'; I would like to continue with that theme, and add a few more thoughts...

BAPTISM

Jesus first instruction in Matthew 28 was to baptise new followers. Over the centuries this has become a formalised procedure under the authority of appointed church leaders, a far cry from Philip's impromptu baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch [Acts 8:26-40]. All that is actually required for a bona fide baptism, is safe water deep enough for immersion, someone willing to do the honours and a witness or two—the significance of which was described in the last letter.

It's important to take time to study the act together, so baptismal candidates know why it's important—and so everyone involved approaches it with expectation. There is so much more to water baptism than a simple act of obedience; the baptism pages on the website will give you some pointers.

Next month, my husband and I have the privilege of baptising some dear friends. They have chosen a place in a local river where one of the first missionaries to the UK baptised new converts non-stop for 36 days (!); a gloriously peaceful spot with an amazing history. There will be no music, preaching or special liturgy, just a simple, profound, and beautiful declaration of the transformation that has been taking place in their lives. And I will probably take a celebratory picnic, along with bread and wine!

BREAKING BREAD

Like water baptism, 'Breaking Bread' regularly—as mentioned in a previous email—is a powerful way of proclaiming the efficacy of the Lord's death over ourselves and our households; and it is important that new disciples learn how to do this both for themselves, and in a group.

I will make a webpage focused on this eventually—when I have time—but until then my suggestion would be to re-read 'The Power of the Cross' chapter on the website together. Each person could quietly, and individually, bring to the Cross anything which is troubling their conscience, and ask for forgiveness [1 John 1:9]; then reflect on how their particular need or circumstance has been met in the Cross. The group or pair could then read together through Matthew 26:17-30 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Using ordinary bread and wine (or grape juice), model this powerful, prophetic act for new Christians by lifting each element up in turn, and saying something like:

'Thank You Lord, for Your death and resurrection. (Break the bread.) Thank You for Your body which was broken for us/me. (Lift up the cup of wine.) Thank You for Your blood which was poured out for us/me, and the Covenant of Blessing You have made with us/me.

We/I proclaim the power of Jesus' death over....., and we/I receive Your grace and provision for my needs.

Help us/me to live in the good of what You have purchased for me.

Amen.'

Finally, pass round the bread and wine to each person, saying, *'The body/blood of Christ given for you'*.

Participants can be encouraged to put all this in their own words, but some people will appreciate having the words above, or something similar, printed out for them, until they gain confidence, especially if they have been familiar with a liturgical 'Communion'.

PRAYER

We also need to teach new disciples how to pray...

Many new Christians are concerned about 'bothering' God with their concerns. My suggestion would be to choose Scriptures to explore together which demonstrate His desire to be involved in the details of our lives, and His great and wonderful promises to answer our prayers. Tell personal stories of answers to prayer, from your own and others' experience. Then we need to model it for them.

Many people are anxious about praying aloud in a group. One way of helping people get over this is to choose a concern to pray about, and then to pray one sentence in turn, until the concern is satisfied. The benefit of this way of doing things is that most people can manage a simple sentence, no one person says all there is to say, leaving nothing but repetition for others, and the all-important sense of agreement is fostered.

WORSHIP

We were created to be worshippers, and recent decades have produced a wonderful array of worship music to be introduced to new disciples.

However, not everyone is comfortable singing in a small group—or anywhere they can be heard! Fortunately, biblical worship is so much more than singing. Why not study together the Scriptures on praise, or discuss how praise, thanksgiving and worship have a different focus?

Sing together if you feel comfortable, but also take time to explore different ways of bringing alternative offerings when you meet together. Perhaps each person could share an item which represents something that they are really thankful for; perhaps someone might write a poem, paint a picture, take a photograph, share a piece of music, or contribute a reading. (If meeting in a pair, any of these suggestions can be shared in a very natural, informal way, over a cup of coffee.)

Above all, invite Jesus into everything you do together, not just a dedicated time for 'spiritual things'. Whether it is eating, laughing, sharing or working together, it all has the potential to be holy ground!

And that's it for now! I hope you have found these few reflections helpful—do let me know! And if you have any thoughts, particularly about creative ways to worship, please drop me a line.

God bless, 'til next time

Kate W at Rhythms of Grace