

A Time For Everything
Ecclesiastes Ch 3 v 6

Do you still 'Spring Clean?' I'm not sure if the younger generations do but in years gone by it was very much a part of the yearly cycle of house work. Christmas had come and gone - the decorations neatly packed away for another year and then the annual clean and sort out would begin. In clearing out drawers and cupboards things would be found that had long been forgotten and thought lost for the last twelve months. 'That's where I put it!' you say 'I thought I had lost it.' As one gets older losing things seems to become more of a regular occurrence!

Also as the years roll by, I seem to save more and throw away less and thus the house becomes more cluttered. Why am I saving this? Just in case! In case what I ask myself? At least our ministers, who move house several times during their ministry, get a chance to find, lose, save and throw away if they so wish.

Think back over your church life. When did you first find Christ? Was it through growing up in a Christian household and following the ways of your parents or did it come to you in a blinding moment like Saul on the road to Damascus? Was it a friend, colleague, Sunday School teacher or minister who just meant something special to you? Have you lost any of that initial enthusiasm of living with God as your guide and friend or have you found new insight with every new chapter of your life's journey? Have you saved experiences from your youth to pass on to the next generation and thrown away unnecessary clutter?

I have just reread the 'Lost and Found' chapter, Ch 15, in Luke's Gospel. I think that the three stories (The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin and The Prodigal Son) show us how those three key figures never gave up looking and hoping that they would find what they were looking for. They were determined to find what was lost. They are really examples of God caring for his people. It is like God caring for us. Think back over the times that we have lost our way – the times that we have chosen our own path – and the times that we have disobeyed God's laws. God has never given up on us. He has sought us out and found us. He was and is quick to forgive and happy that we want to return to his ways. The shepherd is so thrilled when he finds the lost sheep, the woman when she finds her coin and the father when his son returns home.

By the time you read this paper many of you will have heard about 'Holy Habits' – an outreach programme for the whole Province designed not only to deepen our own faith but to bring others into the faith so that they may experience knowing God as we do. Maybe, in a way, we are being asked to become the shepherd, the woman searching for the coin, and the father welcoming home his lost son. In developing our skills of evangelism in acceptable ways we hope to grow our congregations, not only in number, but in awareness of God's being in the word, his love for each one of us and his way of living in harmony with each other.

For Discussion

1. What have you lost and found throughout your life?
2. Do you find it easy to talk to others about your church life and therefore spread God's word?

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