

Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



Slow Food

***"Let me understand the teaching of your precepts;
then I will meditate on your wonders." Psalm 119:27***

In an age of 'fast food', we prepare food quickly and we eat it quickly. The Slow Food movement started in the 1980s when an Italian journalist asked why, if there was fast food, there was not also slow food.

A European teachers' conference in which I am involved takes place annually in different countries across Europe. When we meet in France, we have to provide significantly more time in the programme for each meal because there they take much longer than in most other countries to which we go. However, the feed-back (pardon the pun!) on such occasions always includes comments about how good it is to sit and take time as we eat together.

In our age of instant communication and sound-bites, we also have speeded-up education and bite-size curriculum materials. Can we provide an antidote to this with a little space, somewhere to meditate on the wonders of God's wonderful world?

Consistent with his Quaker Christian faith, Parker J Palmer challenges us to provide for and welcome moments of silence in the classroom. He says that a typical group can tolerate about fifteen seconds of silence before someone needs to break the tension by speaking. He continues, *"The silences that interest me most are the ones that occur midstream in a discussion . . . Like most people, I am conditioned to interpret silence as a symptom of something gone wrong . . . But suppose that my students are neither dumb-founded nor dismissive but digging deep, . . . wise enough to know that this moment calls for thought . . . not wasting time but doing a more reflective form of learning."**

In the words of poet William Henry Davies, popularised in an advertisement for Center Parcs, *"What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?"*

We teach our children to read as quickly as possible, even to skim-read, and that has its place. But if that becomes everything, they will always read for gist rather than substance and detail. The psalmist's approach to reading is different for he says he wants to understand and meditate on God's wonders.

Lord of time and space, help me to give my students time to read slowly and space to be silent and dig deep. Amen.

*Parker J Palmer (1998) *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p. 82.

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:21-23