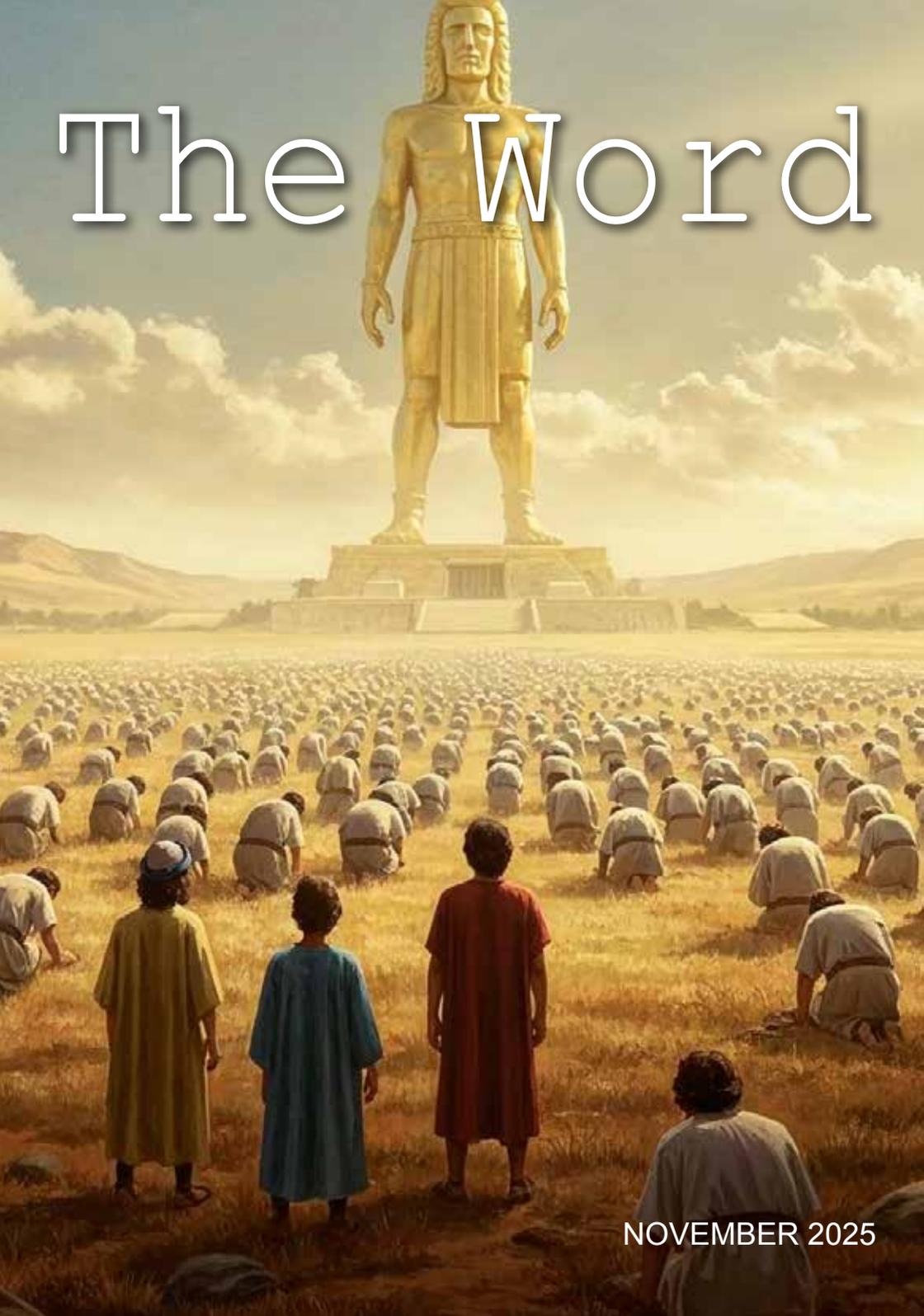


The Word



NOVEMBER 2025



www.cssu.org.uk

A NOTE ABOUT ONLINE RESOURCES

In order to be relevant and accessible to all readers, we sometimes recommend resources from websites. We choose these resources carefully, but cannot check or endorse all the content of a website – particularly future content, which is impossible to predict. Always remember to check internet opinions against Bible principles, and talk to someone at your Sunday School or church about any concerns that arise.

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The Word, November 2025



Editor: Becky Lewis



Designer: Julia Snobelen

The Word: Different

We live in a world where difference often leads to arguments, and even violence. So how should Christians view being different?

In this issue, we've grouped some ideas about difference into four sections:

1) God is different

How did God show Israel that He was different from the gods of other nations?

2) Jesus is different

What was so special about Jesus that he changed the world?

3) Called to be different

How are Jesus' followers called to live differently?

4) Responding to difference

How should we treat the differences we see in each other?

We hope this issue helps you think about some of the things that make our faith unique, what it really means to be holy, and how it is important not simply to be different, but to make a difference.

With love to you all,

Becky Lewis



Past issues of 'The Word' are available to download here:

the-word.uk

GOD IS DIFFERENT:

The Name of God

By Rachel Madden

Religions in ancient times were based around rituals, performed to bargain with particular gods who were each tied to a function – one for storms, one for death, one for the sun...

Imagine I am a villager living in the ancient near east. I see a black crow fly over my village at a time of year when this is rare. Later that day, we are attacked by enemies. I give special meaning to the unusual event of the crow. In future, if black crows fly overhead out of season, we all believe an enemy is going to attack. So when crows appear, we perform special rituals or sacrifices to stop it. If something goes wrong, and enemies still attack, we don't suspect there's something wrong with the way we connected the black crow and the attack. Instead we suspect there's something wrong with the ritual, and we fine-tune the ritual.

In our village we believe that gods are approached through ritual. The name of each god is tied to their function in the world, and we swear by a god like this: "I swear by Mot (the god of the dead) that I will offer five sacrifices to him if



he allows my father to live!” As you can see, our religion is a form of bargaining or pleading, and is all about what rituals we do, not what we believe in. And when things get extremely bad, like famine or flood, it means a god is angry and we have to give our most treasured possessions to him in sacrifice. Sometimes, people would even sacrifice their own children to make sure bad things didn’t happen.

When God revealed Himself to Moses, God said,

“I AM WHO I AM’. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’...Yahweh, the God of your fathers... has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.” (Exodus 3:14-15)

This name is an unusual name for a god because it wasn’t related to a function. God doesn’t tell Israel that He is a god of the dead, or the sky, or the earth, or any other thing they might see. He tells them He is a God who exists. He is the REAL God, existing in all times, for all people.

Even more, when Moses later asks to see God’s glory, God explains who He is in terms of qualities of character:

“Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.” (Exodus 34:6-7)

This was an absolutely ground-breaking idea! Here was a god who didn’t define himself by his function, but by who He was – a set of moral qualities.

God’s name is just one of the many ways He proclaimed His difference to the gods of the nations around, to show that He exists as the one true God of the world.



GOD IS DIFFERENT:

Creation account

Creation stories were common in the ancient world. They all contain similar themes, such as chaotic waters and darkness. However, the Genesis account stands out in stark contrast for its order and majesty.

Below are some extracts from neighbouring cultures. How are they different to Genesis 1-2? (Hint: think about how God shows Himself to Elijah in 1 Kings 19:11-13.)

“Atum says: ‘I am he who came into being in the primeval waters. I am Atum... I sneezed shu [air], I spat Tefnut [moisture].’”

Coffin Texts, Spell 80 (Egypt)

Translation by R.O. Faulkner, ‘The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts’, vol 1, 1973

“Geshtu-e, a god who had intelligence, they [the gods] slaughtered in their assembly. Nintu mixed clay with his flesh and blood... After she had mixed that clay... The Igigi, the great gods, spat spittle upon the clay.”

Atrahasis I:206-213 (Mesopotamia)

Translation by Stephanie Dalley, ‘Myths from Mesopotamia’, rev. 2000.

He [Marduk] split her [Tiamat] like a shellfish into two parts:
Half of her he set up as the sky,
He stretched out the skin, and appointed a watch
With the instruction not to let her waters escape.

Enuma Elis IV:137-140 (Babylon)

Translation by W.G. Lambert (a Christadelphian), ‘Babylonian Creation Myths’, 2013.

On the next page is a table summarising some key differences. Next time you read Genesis 1, think about how structured, calm and purposeful the account is.

Culture	Who creates?	How is it done?	Role of humans	Big ideas
EGYPT	One main god, Atum, but many gods involved.	Atum brings himself into being. Creates other gods by spitting or producing them. Gods then shape the world.	Formed from the tears of Atum.	Creation tied to the gods - natural forces like sun, sky, air are gods.
MESOPOTAMIA	Assembly of gods.	Lesser gods do hard work. They rebel. Humans created out of clay and god's blood.	To do the work instead of the lesser gods.	Humans exist so gods can rest.
BABYLON	Many gods. Marduk is hero.	Marduk kills Tiamat (chaos goddess). Splits her body to form heaven and earth.	Created to serve the gods.	World is born from violence. Humans are servants.
ISRAEL	One God.	Speaks and it is done. In command of all natural forces.	Male and female created to rule earth as God's image.	God is one. Creation is good. Humans have dignity and responsibility.

For this is what the LORD says -
 he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and
 made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty,
 but formed it to be inhabited -
 he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other."

ISAIAH 45:18

GOD IS DIFFERENT:

God is One

The Jewish faith stands out as monotheistic (believing in one God, rather than a collection of gods with different powers and functions). Early Christian faith also stood out from Greek and Roman beliefs in this way. However, surrounding culture soon influenced Christian faith. 1700 years ago, after heated debates, the Nicene Creed (statement of faith) was put together, which shows the church moving towards Trinitarian beliefs. This was expanded further in Constantinople (318 CE), and it is this version which remains the basis for most mainstream church services today. Non-trinitarian groups like the Christadelphians are unusual for sticking more closely to earlier Christian beliefs.

Look at how these faith statements developed over 200 years. Which parts altered the most?

Old Roman Creed 2nd/3rd Century	Nicene Creed 325 CE	Council of Constantinople 381 CE
I believe in God the Father Almighty	We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.	We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
And in Christ Jesus His only Son, our Lord,	And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;	And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;
Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.	by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;	by whom all things were made; who for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost and of the virgin Mary, and was made man;
Was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried;	he suffered	he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried,

Old Roman Creed 2nd/3rd Century	Nicene Creed 325 CE	Council of Constantinople 381 CE
The third day he rose again from the dead,	and the third day he rose again,	and the third day he rose again, according to the scriptures,
He ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father,	ascended into heaven;	and ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father,
Whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead;	from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.	from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.
And in the Holy Spirit,	And in the Holy Ghost.	And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.
The holy Church,	But those who say: "There was a time when he was not" and "He was not before he was made" and "He was made out of nothing" or "He is of another substance" or "essence" or "The Son of God is created" or "changeable" or "alterable" - they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.	In one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
The forgiveness of sins,		We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.
The resurrection of the flesh.		We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

For more on this topic, listen to Bible Feed podcast episode 84: 'The Nicene Creed'.



JESUS IS DIFFERENT:

What was so special about Jesus?

He only preached in a small area for a few years, yet Jesus Christ has had a lasting impact on the world for over 2000 years. **What was so special about him? How do you think he compares to world leaders and influencers of today?**

His teachings

- Turned the world upside-down.
- Based on everyday life that people could relate to.
- Aimed high in terms of expectations.
- Declared a loving, generous God who is like a father.

Behaviour matched teachings

- Didn't use his power for his own advantage.
- Sacrificed himself for others.
- Led by example.
- Focused on those who could offer nothing in return.

.....

“Many fundamental beliefs and values in Western society, such as the sanctity of life and the concept of equality, have their roots in Christian teachings.”

Bible Feed podcast ep. 74: ‘Is Christianity relevant?’

.....



“Jesus devoted his life to teaching and demonstrating God’s fundamentals. Everything he taught was radical.”

Nathan Badger, tidings.org/articles/radical



‘My burden is light’

By Becky Lewis

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

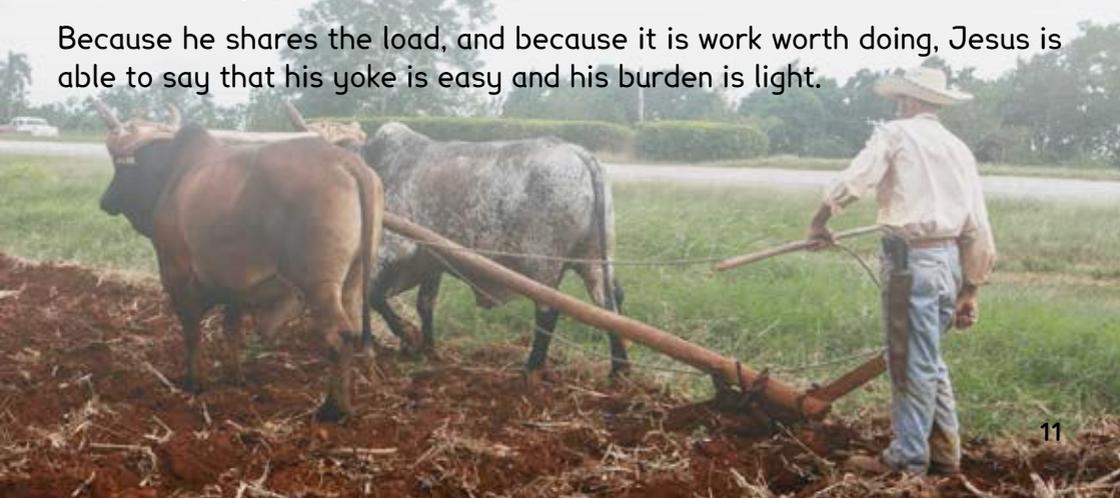
Matthew 11:28-30

King Solomon tried to bring glory to God, and himself, using the traditional symbols of royalty—an extravagant palace, many chariots and horses, and many wives and concubines. In order to achieve all of this, he enslaved foreigners and taxed his own citizens heavily (1 Kings 9:21-23). By the end of his reign, his subjects were desperate for relief:

“Jeroboam... and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: “Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.” (1 Kings 12:3-4)

Jesus is a very different kind of leader. He shares in the work. He doesn't require sacrifices of his subjects that he hasn't already made himself. The work he invites us to do is not vain or empty, to prop up his ego, or to create a veneer of grandeur. God's work brings about growth, companionship and real joy. It is challenging, but also rewarding.

Because he shares the load, and because it is work worth doing, Jesus is able to say that his yoke is easy and his burden is light.



CALLED TO BE DIFFERENT:

Holy

“Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

1 Peter 1:15-16

What does it mean to be holy? It's easy to think that holiness means being 'set apart', away from worldly things - keeping separate, pure and avoiding sin as much as possible. But holiness isn't really about turning away from something - it's more about turning towards God. And this turning changes us from the inside out, to be more like Him. Paul calls it being “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). Peter goes on to say, “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart” (verse 22).

Babies don't learn to speak through textbooks. They watch faces. They mimic sounds, study lips, and absorb love and security through eye contact. They are shaped by what they focus on. Paul writes, “All of us who have had that veil removed can SEE and REFLECT the glory of the Lord. And the Lord... makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image” (2 Corinthians 3:18, NLT). God doesn't demand we be perfect, He invites us to look. What we look at forms us. If we constantly gaze at the world, its news, trends, and distractions, those things shape our hearts. But if we fix our eyes on Jesus, on His grace, gentleness, and truth, we begin to reflect Him. We become what we behold. True transformation begins not with effort, but with focus.

By Sarah Jorgensen, gospelbites.org



What
Faith
Looks Like

New podcast!

In order to be different, it helps to know what we're aiming for. *What Faith Looks Like* is designed to do just that. Each episode explores people of faith from the Bible, revealing timeless lessons to inspire and strengthen our faith today.

A life transformed

Think about how much the Apostle Paul must have changed following his conversion on the Damascus Road (Acts 9). In his old life, Saul had been a strict Pharisee (Acts 26:5).

Matthew 23 shows us that the Pharisees had a lot to learn. Paul must have gone through a complete reset, and he was keen to share his learning with others.

Saul to Paul: a life transformed

By Mick Roberts

Shift from 'love for self' to 'love for others' (Romans 12:9-16)

Embracing a diverse community (1 Corinthians 12)

Willingness to share his failings (Romans 7:21-25)

Open about his past mistakes (1 Timothy 1:12-15)

Accepting need to be flexible (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Committed to supporting others (Acts 20:32-35)

Challenged religious hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11-16)

Can you think of any other Biblical characters whose names were changed to reflect a new identity or purpose? There are quite a few!

For more on growth and transformation, check out the past issue of The Word called "New Life" (March 2021).

RESPONDING TO DIFFERENCE:

Disagreements

What does the Bible have to say about how to handle disagreements?
Complete these verses.

Proverbs 18:2

Fools find no pleasure in
understanding

James 1:19

Everyone should be quick
to listen,

James 2:13

Judgement without mercy

2 Timothy 2:23-25

Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments,

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome

Opponents must be gently instructed.



For more on this topic, listen to the podcast

Pause to Consider:

“Godly solutions to worldly problems” (12 mins)



Diversity

“Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:11-13

If we're all supposed to be growing to be more like Jesus, as this quote from Ephesians says, does that mean that we'll all end up being exactly the same? No! There's a difference between character and personality. Our character is made up of moral traits – the way we choose to behave (e.g., being kind, honest, generous). We are all called to develop the character of Jesus as much as we can. But our personalities will be different – each church is intended to incorporate a diverse group of people of different ages, different gifts, different personalities, different experiences of life... We are not lots of separate bodies that all look the same. Instead, when we are combined together, our diverse ecclesia is formed into one body – the body of Christ.

“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:12-27



RESPONDING TO DIFFERENCE:

Introverts & extroverts

One example of difference is whether we have a more introverted or extroverted personality. It's helpful to remember that we can be different in this way, as an introverted friend might need a different type of support to an extroverted one. If someone is upset, it's worth asking them how they would like to be helped – do they want to problem-solve together, do they just want to be heard, or do they want some time and space to think things through on their own? What would you prefer?

Take our quiz to help you work out if you might be an introvert or an extrovert! Select the answer that fits you most of the time.

1. After school or church, how do you most want to spend your time?
 - a) Sometimes chill alone, sometimes meet up. It depends on my mood. (2 points)
 - b) Relax by myself with a book, music or game. (1 point)
 - c) Invite a couple of friends over to hang out. (3 points)
2. At a birthday party, you usually...
 - a) Join in for a while, but take breaks when it gets too busy. (2 points)
 - b) Enjoy talking with lots of people and joining the group activities. (3 points)
 - c) Stick with one or two friends, or find a quiet spot to chat. (1 point)
3. When you've been around people all day, you feel...
 - a) Energised – I could keep going for hours! (3 points)
 - b) Pretty worn out – I need some space to recharge. (1 point)
 - c) A mix – depends how fun the group was and how long it lasted. (2 points)
4. If you had a group project, you'd rather...
 - a) Work as a team and bounce ideas around. (3 points)
 - b) Split it up: some independent work, then come together to share. (2 points)
 - c) Do most of it on my own so I can focus. (1 point)
5. For the weekend, which plan sounds best?
 - a) Having a low-key evening with just one or two close friends. (1 point)
 - b) Going on an outing with a big group – like bowling, theme park, or sports. (3 points)
 - c) Doing both – one day out with friends, one day relaxing on my own. (2 points)



6. When you're upset, what helps you the most?
- a) Having space alone to think and calm down. (1 point)
 - b) A bit of both - time alone first, then sharing with someone I trust. (2 points)
 - c) Talking it through with a friend or family member. (3 points)

Add Up Your Points!

6-10 points ⇒ **INTROVERT**

You recharge on your own and prefer calm, close connections.

11-15 points ⇒ **AMBIVERT**

You can go either way - sometimes sociable, sometimes solo, depending on the situation.

16-18 points ⇒ **EXTROVERT**

You thrive on people, energy and talking things out.

**Think about these Bible characters.
Do you think they might have been introverts or extroverts?**

- Miriam (Exodus 2:7)
- Moses (Exodus 4:10)
- David (2 Samuel 6:14-15)
 - Mary (Luke 2:19)
 - Peter (Acts 2:14)

RESPONDING TO DIFFERENCE:



Shared horizons

From clevedonchurch.co.uk/blog, shared with permission

None of us sit high enough to look down on anyone. This powerful statement resonates with a profound truth that echoes across the landscapes of our lives. It reminds us that, regardless of our status, achievements, or circumstances, we are all bound by a common thread of humanity. In a world that often prides itself on hierarchies and comparisons, this reminder serves as a humbling call to embrace empathy and humility.

Picture a scene from everyday life: a busy street, a bustling office, or crowded public transport. People from all walks of life, each carrying their own stories, struggles, and tri-

umphs. It's easy to make snap judgments based on appearances or perceived social standing. However, the teachings of Jesus guide us towards a different approach - one rooted in love and understanding.

Jesus, in his radical inclusivity, never placed himself above others. Instead, he chose to dine with tax collectors and speak with those deemed unworthy by society (Luke 19:1-10, Matthew 9:10-13). He understood that true greatness wasn't about elevating oneself, but about lifting others up. This example challenges us to look beyond the superficial layers of societal status and see the inherent worth in every individual.

In practising this level of humility, we recognise that life's journey is a shared experience. We all face challenges and triumphs, and no one is immune to the highs and lows that life presents. When we encounter someone who might be struggling, it's an opportunity to extend a hand, not a judgment. This approach fosters a culture of empathy, where understanding trumps ego, and compassion overcomes criticism.

We all face challenges and triumphs, and no one is immune to the highs and lows that life presents.

Moreover, this perspective doesn't just benefit those we help; it enriches our own lives. There's a unique joy and fulfilment that comes from connecting with others on a genuine level, from recognising the shared human experience in each of our stories.

It's a reminder that our own worth isn't diminished by acknowledging the worth of others.

However, practising this level of humility isn't always easy. It requires us to set aside our egos, to actively listen, and to engage with others without preconceived notions. It's about being present in our interactions and recognising that each person we meet has something valuable to teach us.

In our quest to 'sit high,' whether in our careers, social circles, or even within our own self-perceptions, let's not forget the value of humility and empathy. In the end, it's not the height of our seat that defines us, but the depth of our understanding and the breadth of our compassion.

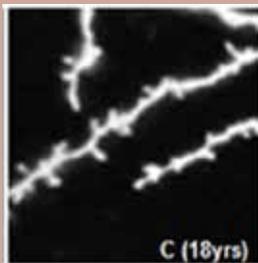
So, next time we find ourselves quick to judge or feel a sense of superiority, let's recall that profound statement: "None of us sit high enough to look down on anyone." Let it be a reminder to lower our gaze from the pedestals of pride and meet others on the level ground of empathy and respect. In doing so, we not only follow in the footsteps of Jesus but also contribute to a kinder, more understanding world.

RESPONDING TO DIFFERENCE:

Different wiring

Did you know that autistic brains grow differently to others? This is an example of a hidden difference that can have a large impact on how we experience life.

Our brains are made of billions of cells called neurons, which pass messages to each other through connections called synapses. Together, these form pathways that help us make sense of the world – how we notice sounds, temperature, movement, and so on. As we mature, our brains prune these pathways, making it easier for us to process all of the information, to work out what's important and what we can ignore. According to scientists at Columbia University in 2014*, autistic brains go through much less pruning. In their study, non-autistic brains had pruned about 50% of their synapses, while autistic brains had only pruned about 16%.



Non-autistic synapses



Autistic synapses

This might explain why autistic people tend to find situations more overwhelming, and why we can get more easily confused or distracted by all our sensory inputs. It just goes to show that two people can experience the same situation very differently.

* "Children with autism have extra synapses in brain", Tang, Sulzer et al., pub. in 'Neuron'

SAVE THE DATE!

The Christadelphian Support Network (CSN) is organising a Neurodiversity Awareness Day, to promote greater understanding of our differently-wired brains.

Saturday 7 March 2026, Solihull Ecclesial Hall, God willing.