

## **Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: July 18<sup>th</sup>: 2 Corinthians 13: 5-10: Some Notes**

Test yourselves. Don't draft along, tasking everything for granted. (Quoting Jeremiah 24.6) authority given for building up not for breaking down. Complete and mature. Koinonia = Partnership. Give yourselves regular health checks.

It all begins to sound a bit neurotic: like the person getting ready for a date, but continually turning back to the mirror to do just a bit more adjustment. "That was good!" "Yes. but not good enough!" There is a strong urge to rest on laurels that have been hard won; and a natural suspicion of "not another ruddy initiative!" Age and maturity encourage "I have fought the good fight, I have....", and maybe now a bit of peace. It's like old man taking young dog for a walk, Old man wants to sit down.. Mountaineer wants a break, of indefinite duration, before tackling yet another mountain.

The partnership bit is less problematic. Most would agree that doing things together, using everyone's ideas and gifts is the best way to do things – rather than one driver and twenty reluctant passengers; one speaker and twenty wishing the speaker would try listening just this once.

It is a balancing act. Yes, always onwards and upwards; but yes pause to enjoy the view, and, of course, to think about how and where next. The Church has to be learn to be Expectant, Militant and Triumphant all at the same time. A lot of this is to do with listening. Old people's group doing really well. Children? Children's Group doing really well. Young people? Worship style attracting new people; but some regulars have left. People are daring to speak up; but some are not speaking up, only looking uncomfortable. A church needs to be a listening community to be learning community to be a healthy and perhaps growing community. And of course a church also needs to know its limitations: if 10 30 a.m. on Sunday is everybody's preferred service time, and 20 want a Communion service and 20 don't, there are choices to be made and explained.

Paul is saying don't wait for the boss to tell you what to do. He might have said don't wait for the consultant to tell you what to do. Governments are sometimes accused of setting up Royal Commissions to postpone making decisions, or of appointing special advisers to duck personal responsibility for potentially unpopular decisions.

Churches need to be reflective without being neurotic. The same goes for individuals.