

A PLACE TO LEAD FROM

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INTRODUCTION TO GALATIANS 5 AND MY STILL SMALL VOICE

Galatians 5 is a wonderful passage of scripture as a leader. It states 'It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then and do not let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.' The passage sets out how we as Christians have been set free from the yoke of slavery to the law, and how we are to live by the Spirit.

Yet, these words that bring me hope have also given me a sense of dread. As a leader I often feel so far off from Paul's vision for living this Christian life. I read his challenge to walk by the Spirit so as not to gratify the desires of the flesh, and to produce the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control), and I wonder what went wrong.

ADOPTING

In the past year my husband and I have adopted two boys. In the midst of changes turning our lives upside down I have been reflecting, because I now have two boys calling me mum for the first time, on what it really means to live by the Holy Spirit.

To be able to adopt our boys we had to answer a lot of questions about whether we could cope with the addition of two new people, coming with lots of hurts and fears, into our lives. Were we personally resilient? Would unresolved things from our past leave us in a crumpled heap unable to complete even the most

basic tasks? Was our relationship resilient? Would the extra pressures and strains reveal fault lines in our marriage?

Then we read lots of books and articles and went on courses (many similarities to becoming a vicar), learning about what it means to become a family through adoption. It was this process that brought me afresh to Galatians 5.

ATTACHMENT

Often in life, in family, and in work we focus on how we are behaving. Are we good Christians, people, colleagues, and leaders? We then seek to 'change' our behaviour to be more like Jesus. In our learning about adoption we came across the theory of attachment, and how attachment develops in a young child, and how this can grow securely, insecurely or in a disorganised manner, (see [Fostering and Adoption](#) for more information).

When our attachments are insecure or disorganised our behaviour can become controlling, fearful, anxious and aggressive, because we have not received the right care from our parent.

I began to read Galatians 5 with an eye to thinking about whether I am attached to God, in the same way that I am



learning to be attached to my boys and my husband, and this changed how I perceive Paul's words. In the passage Paul makes clear God has chosen us, and has made us an offer to become our father, to adopt us into his family. Our attachment to God has been broken, and it needs to be restored, and this Paul tells us comes about not through our own will, but by God's Spirit.

As adoptive parents we have done a lot of learning about how to create a new family, and for this you need to find ways to attach to one another. If you can create secure attachments then you will be able to love. If you have secure attachments you can put away fear, anxiety, the feeling of not being good enough, and instead grow in kindness and gentleness.

As leaders our call is to grow in our attachment to God, through his Holy Spirit. Through this attachment we see his wonderful fruit grow because God has promised his Holy Spirit will bring these about in us, not because I tried harder to be better, but because I found ways to attach to God the father, to know I'm loved, through his Holy Spirit.

A CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

In becoming a mum through adoption I have been given a unique perspective on what God feels about us, and this is changing me as a person and therefore as a leader. I am coming to realise in a new way how I have an adoptive father, who has chosen me, and I have chosen him. I am even more amazed at this God whom I call father because he has adopted not just two boys, but all those who call on his Son.

He knows when I'm anxious, scared, stressed or just plain exhausted, he understands why the voice in my head says what it says, and he loves me. He knows I long to be different, and the solution to this is not trying harder, but to find ways

to be in his presence so that I can know I am loved, through the work of the Holy Spirit. The secret is not how can I 'transform' my life so I am more efficient, organised, pastoral, strategic, visionary, theological, profound (insert your own longing here). The secret to being a person first and a leader second is this: 'To know and to be known by the living God who gave himself for me that I might live'. Then I can begin to live in the freedom God has called me to in Galatians.

So when the voices speak 'you must do better as a leader', I must act, but not to initially to try to be 'better', but instead to run to my father and say 'Dad, hold me, love me, hug me and help me'.

Our second son really struggles with this because of what he's been through. When we hold him in scared moments he struggles, but we persist in the gentleness of holding and hugging because it is what he needs. Maybe it is what we need as well, an awareness of our loving heavenly father who has come to set us free.

I know this isn't a simple thing to do, but I believe this is what God calls us to. Adopting children has been a daily reminder of my calling, first and foremost to an intimate, life changing relationship with my heavenly father. Only with this in place can I dare to lead others.



FOR REFLECTION

1. How would you identify your own attachment to God the father, is it secure, insecure, or disorganised (you might want to read the article on attachment theory)?
2. How can you grow your attachment to God as father?
3. How does your attachment to God affect how you lead in the ministry you are in?