

Thursday 24th September

Original Paragraph from What is God saying document

<https://www.easternbaptist.org.uk/news/what-might-god-be-saying-collation-of-zoom-discussions/>

Discipleship in lockdown makes new connections

As mentioned yesterday, many congregations are dispersed and not all of the people are even known to the leaders, especially where church is going out from a platform like YouTube. This raises the questions of who is listening in, therefore who are our congregation and does this affect what and how we preach? If a minister is preaching to a regular Christian congregation known to them, that by necessity is different from preaching to an unknown online congregation, some of whom may be seeking to learn more about faith. How does a minister reconcile the tension of these two elements and ensure both are disciplined well? Some have said that our fringe people feel more connected: so how can that be grown and how can these people be disciplined? What does discipleship look like when the contact is purely digital? Will we choose to retain our online presence, which perhaps we have known we've needed for ages in order to grow these new disciples? This raises so many questions such as what does community look like online? Is there a difference between a church and a network? Discipleship in lockdown and moving out of lockdown at present raises more question than answers and probably many more than I have cited here. As we move forward it is essential to continue to ask the questions and learn and grow together in our understanding.



Biblical Reflection

God is working in such incredible and creative ways but sadly we sometimes miss or even unwittingly resist what he is doing. In Acts 10, we read about Cornelius who was a Centurion in the Roman occupying force. The Jews would have considered him an enemy, someone who was far from God, but the opposite was true, Cornelius had faith and God was at work in his life! We also read about Peter who had a vision of animals that he would have considered unclean and which God tells him to eat but Peter refused. You can imagine the conflict in his thinking at this point, he is hearing God tell him to do something that he has to refuse to do because to eat would be against God's commands that were ingrained in his thinking. This is an important process of change for Peter as he slowly realizes that he needs to be open to God's leading, even if that means letting go of his prejudices and being open to what we might personally find difficult. If Peter wasn't open to God moulding him and helping him to see new ways of thinking, relating with and ministering to people then the large gathering of people at the end of the passage wouldn't have come to know Jesus.

Questions for Reflection

Do we ever say, 'surely not Lord?' If we do, what are the areas this might be in?

For churches that have made new connections online during lockdown, will we continue to explore this or is our priority to get back into church buildings that possibly very few non-Christians ever come into? Are we open to God's leading wherever that might take us?

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Link to Interview

Interview with Hannah Flemming-Hill, Digital Missioner for the South West Baptist Association

<https://youtu.be/Dzn8cHDbUgE>

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/JQHUGLxTCPumy_ZJ14WCibQur9eoKmtv6BASD7VpAIP8MeByo0QlYvwFQNfohdO.X1eF9XD1JTRK2R0q Passcode: =2Tcy1fU

<https://www.swbaptists.org.uk/mission/digital/>