

Lingering on the edge of forgetfulness

As the Bible collects dust, Christians lose perspective



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CROSS CULTURE

The sad truth of the matter is that when we stop reading the Bible with any faith or confidence, when we stop discussing it at dinner with our children, when we stop wrestling with it in our meeting places and home gatherings and while lying in bed, we're no longer connected to the grand sweep of it, to history, that is His Story, which is also our story.

Which is to say that without our story we're detached from life itself, ignorant of the fact that, in our core we're royalty, yes, just a little lower than the angels, but also naked, muddy, more needy and hungry than imagined, starving, really, all beggars in need of the same bread.

The freezer is full, after all, and

we can always find what we need there. And if we're still feeling down, we can always buy a new TV, or take a trip, or at least invite over company which, today, means a handheld device.

The Bible? Yes, it's a fine heirloom. But there's dusting and other housework, the days are that busy to stop and actually read it. And, well, we've discovered the big book actually makes a better doorstep than anything. At this point, its contradictions seem that irreconcilable.

This, from recently-released Canadian Bible Engagement Study that shows even believers are giving up on the Bible. Just five per cent of Canadians now read it daily, 11 per cent weekly and 14 per cent monthly. Apparently 55 per cent haven't read the Bible. Ever.

Is the older generation finishing strong? Fifty per cent of Canadians who read Scripture weekly in 1996, now don't.

Two-thirds of Canadians identify as "Christian." But that was 90

per cent in 1981. And, without any faith's canonical text, one wonders what its disciples are following.

The survey—80 questions asked of 4,500 respondents—shows, not surprisingly, church attendance invigorates Bible reading. But weekly attendance is now just 16 per cent.

So we live in, as Flannery O'Connor eloquently put it, a culture haunted by the memory of Christ.

Like Paul, we might bring an awakening toward the God that the Greeks recognized serendipitously as the "Unknown God." We might speak into the plethora of ideas in today's marketplace. But now, no, this unknown God is too unknown even for us, people bearing His name. So they simply don't know. Neither do we know.

We don't know we're the one praying in the lion's den. We don't know we're the prophet running, then thrown into the sea. We don't know we're the Prodigal. Or the brother, righteous and bitter. Or the woman at the well, so

astonished and forgiven.

We don't know we're the man left on the roadside, robbed, beaten by life, really, left for dead, desperate, dear God, for anyone's help. We don't know we're the religious travellers scurrying past.

No, we no longer see our own depth, don't know of the cosmic battle raging in each of us, that every time the rooster crows with everyday events, we're in the fight. We know neither how utterly desperate we are, nor how we're loved, insanely, with a love as high as the heavens.

Someday we may know these things again. One wonders, though, what might have to happen first.

For now we'll manage fine, thanks very much, with simple pleasures at best, a stiff upper lip at worst. It's our sort-of Independence Day. No need to hear from any dead men. Or any God-Man either.

Thomas Froese writes on themes of culture and faith. He blogs on fatherhood at www.dailydad.net and his other work is at www.thomasfroese.com.

Counselling questions: what to ask

Picking the right professional an important first step to getting help



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GOOD COUNSEL

When I see a doctor, dentist, or other health professional for the first time, I'm always interested to read certificates or credentials visible in the office or waiting room. It often strikes me how few of my clients ask me about my training or credentials as a psychotherapist when we first meet.

You have rights when it comes to choosing which medical professional you will see. Do you know it's acceptable, even recommended, to shop around and ask questions when interviewing a possible therapist?

Because the connection and trust you build with your therapist is essential to the success of the

process, it's worth some time and effort to find the right person for your needs. Therapy is a relationship and won't be effective if you can't trust your therapist enough to feel comfortable talking about difficult or intimate subjects.

Ask yourself if you feel the person cares for you and your problems, if you feel understood and accepted as you are. If you don't feel you can be honest and real in the person's presence, perhaps the two of you aren't a good match. You shouldn't have to hide your true thoughts and feelings.

Choosing to consult an experienced therapist makes a difference. Experienced practitioners have worked with your problem many times which gives them a broader overview and increased insight. Ask a potential therapist about his or her experience with your area of concern. Competent and caring practitioners will be

happy to answer. Some therapists specialize in certain issues, such as trauma or eating disorders. If you have specific issues to address, you may want to consider the person with the most training and experience in that area.

You have the right to ask about specialized training and how long the therapist has been working in his or her particular area. You will also want to know about the treatment modalities the therapist prefers. If you're not familiar with some of them, just ask about the basic underlying premises. Many excellent therapists use a blend of orientations and that might be just right for you.

Examine the professional's credentials. Which school his or her degree was obtained from, while important, probably doesn't matter as much as the fact that the person has earned the degree required by your province to practice and is in good standing with an

accredited professional organization that upholds ethical standards and requires continuing education for its members.

Trust your instincts. Your therapist may have the necessary credentials and related experience, but if the relationship between the two of you doesn't feel safe and comfortable, chose another therapist.

There is more required to build that vital connection than a client and therapist than having a problem and the experience to address it. It may take a session or two before you know for sure. A good therapist will respect your feelings and your choice and, if needed, will be pleased to refer you to someone else who can help you.

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