

Scripture: a privileged place of meeting

Befriending the text

For the Word of God is a happening, not a thing. Therefore the Bible must become the Word of God, and it does this through the work of the Spirit.

Karl Barth

The Word of God in Scripture is a special sacrament of his presence, just as real, although different in form, as his presence in the Eucharist. The words of Scripture, if we read them in faith, are like a light falling on the darkness of our inner selves so that we can find and recognize that God - Father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ - is also our God. I read and ponder God's action in past ages in order to recognize that same action now in me.

Gerard Hughes

Alan Ecclestone also suggests we approach Scripture with

Selfless attention

Unwearying patience

Passionate commitment

Honesty of purpose

Hunger for truth

Philip Carter is a retired Anglican Priest. He was the inaugural president of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD). He ran the Julian Centre in Adelaide, an independent and ecumenical centre for spirituality, from 1997-2009.

Contact: juliancentre@gmail.com

Charles Williams says that there must be “something of that intellectual willingness to be wrong **in order that words may be heard**”. As believers, we so easily read the Scriptures already knowing what is or what should be there, always having our minds made up. Think about how difficult, risky it is - even precarious - to really letting the Word be itself, letting the Word speak to you and to your need. Not to have an answer - but a question to live through. Befriending the text means befriending silence, in which we bump up against the Divine reality.

As we befriend the text of Scripture, living with it as a symbol - a symbol of a real presence and not an absent reality - we grow to appreciate **who** it points to. Building up a Christian memory, we learn Jesus by **description** (learning to trust his witnesses) only to wake up, under the befriending Spirit, to learn Jesus by **acquaintance**. We do not possess the truth: rather the truth possesses and grasps us.

*We call him the dumb
God with an effrontery beyond
pardon. Whose silence so eloquent
as his? What word so explosive
as that one Palestinian
word with the endlessness of its fallout.*

R.S.Thomas

Philip Carter is a retired Anglican Priest. He was the inaugural president of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD). He ran the Julian Centre in Adelaide, an independent and ecumenical centre for spirituality, from 1997-2009.

Contact: juliancentre@gmail.com