

### 308 God is a realist

It must be really, really frustrating being God. You try to point people in the right direction, and they (we!) think of a host of inventive ways to get it wrong – see below.

And the other thing is, You try to teach people something, and they (I!) say, ‘Ah, I’ve got it now’ but they (I) so quickly forget. For example, today, I wanted to repeat-quote Desmond Tutu:<sup>[303]</sup> ‘*For whatever reason, since humankind showed up on the scene, God does nothing without a human partner,*’ so I looked it up in my all-my-articles file. It seems I *had already quoted it* in an article **five** years ago, where I said ‘**Now** I know why I should intercede.’ And last month I ‘*discovered*’ (again!) why I ought to intercede. Argh!

So, given Tutu’s principle, how does God operate? Well, we do what we think is right, get it badly wrong, and yet God uses our fumbling, messed-up efforts in order to help people, bless people, reduce suffering, and increase the quality of our relationships – with each other and with God.

Given how hopeless I am at putting my own ‘discoveries’ into practice, what do I think I’ve discovered these past few wonderful years?!

Centrally, it’s that humans desperately need community, at every level – personal to global. Individually, the biggest contributor to mental ill-health is loneliness, and globally, if we don’t learn to accept that different countries and cultures see life differently, and learn to work together as a community of nations, humankind simply won’t survive. I reckon God is very concerned about this and will work with us in any way possible.

And what can I do? What can my church do? What is God’s priority? I used to think it was about ‘saving souls’; I didn’t verbalise it, but I guess it was about rescuing people, so that as many as possible went to heaven. And, given the general lowering of moral standards, we need to help people know what God’s moral rules are.

By contrast, I guess my main concern now is along the lines of the Lord’s prayer: building God’s kingdom *now*, people (everyone) having enough to eat, and everyone forgiving one another.

With my former approach, we Christians were the ones with the answers, and our job was to persuade others to follow our lead. Now, however, it’s much more about working with anyone and everyone, learning from each other, and together sorting out the mess.

Sounds like I’ve gone all ‘love is all you need’, and forgotten about Jesus dying for our sins. Not at all! Jesus’ life, death and resurrection are central to all I believe and do; it’s what gives me energy to keep going. But that’s how I, personally, relate to God and to those who share my faith; and to those who don’t, I relate on the basis that we need to work together to build community – at every level.