

REFLECTION - 6



*"Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep.*

*Live in harmony with one another;
do not be haughty, but associate
with the lowly; do not claim to be
wiser than you are." (Romans 12:15-16)*

We are transformed through our relationship with God. Perhaps no one offers a starker example of this than Paul, a man who persecuted the followers of Christ, only to become one of the most ardent and devout believers himself. This transformation is rooted in God's generosity to Paul. Despite his numerous transgressions and attacks on God's people, God does not turn away from him. He helps Paul to become all that he can be. Likewise, we should be confident in God's love of us and his power to save and transform, for we are 'fearfully and lovingly made' (Psalm 139). We are unique, each given gifts so that we might help craft a world on earth which reflects His Kingdom in Heaven. So do not be afraid to make mistakes as you grow. Have faith that even if you should stray, God can help you return to the right path if you put your trust in Him.



Through his letters, we are offered direct insight into Paul's faith. In his letter to the Romans, Paul reflects on the marks of a true Christian and appeals followers to 'be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God' (Romans 12:2). Change does not just happen. We must choose to give ourselves over to God. So then when Paul instructs followers to live in harmony with others, to weep when they weep and to rejoice when they rejoice, he is unveiling one of the pathways to transformational faith - solidarity and lessons learnt through humility. Gifts that come from offering our support and following the needs of others over our own.

Rev Ray Gaston of St Chad and St Mark's, Wolverhampton has rooted his missional work in the concept of 'solidarity over charity'. Instead of offering their 'charity', they step back and uplift the voices of those they want to support. He asserts that truly standing with others requires us to give up any ego - it is not our place to speak for the disenfranchised, instead we should ensure they are heard. You need to be generous in your ability to listen and to learn. By embedding this culture of solidarity throughout all their work, they have found the life of their church transformed. Not only is their congregation growing, but members are feeling revitalised as they take an active role in serving their community. They have learned new ways to worship which celebrate their diversity.



So let's try going a step further than meeting people where they are in order to bring them back to us; instead join them with our whole hearts and let them see the transformation power of God.

