

Lent study group @ Eccles
Christ and the Chocolaterie

Wednesday 1 April

Week 5: Growing Up – The Process of Change

In Eccles, we have been following a Lent course designed by Hilary Brand and based on the 2000 film *Chocolat*. These materials are provided in lieu of the final session on Wednesday 1 April. You are welcome to use them individually, for personal reflection – or, if you are online, to join us for a ‘virtual’ study group at 2.30pm on Wednesday 1 April via ‘Zoom’ using the following link: <https://zoom.us/j/165256284> (Meeting ID: 165 256 284). It’s easy – all you need is a phone or computer with a camera and a microphone. Contact Rev Naomi (naomi.oates@methodist.org.uk / 01732 875 072) if you have any questions.

Last week (Week 4) we looked at ‘Getting Real.’ In the Zoom study group, we talked about our experiences of ‘difference’ (eg worshipping in different church traditions) and what it means to try and ‘be perfect’ (Matthew 5:48). We felt we were all on a journey with God, aiming to grow every day in grace and holiness – but certainly not perfect yet!



Clip

If you have access to the film *Chocolat*, watch from 1:29:45 (just after ‘I know. I’m sorry. I’m sorry’) to 1:34:14 (just after Caroline says ‘Goodnight, Paul’).

To ponder

Many of the characters in the film do some ‘growing up’ as part of the story. In order to do so, they need to acknowledge their need of change. Choose a character, and ponder the following questions:

- What did this character have to acknowledge in order to grow up?
- Can you pinpoint the moment when the process of change began for them? Was there something that inspired or motivated them to change?
- What actions did they take that demonstrated that they had changed?
- For many characters, this involved ‘shaking off’ the influence of another character who was exercising control over them in an unhelpful way. Was this the case for your chosen character?

Read John 8:1-11 and take a moment to sit quietly with the words.

To ponder

Hilary Brand suggests that “Jesus pointed out the only difference between this woman and her accusers. She had broken the ‘eleventh commandment’ – *Thou shalt not get caught*. Her shame was public while theirs remained private.”

How do you feel when you find out from the news that someone famous has a shameful secret?

How have you reacted when someone you know has admitted a failure or weakness to you? Did it weaken or strengthen your relationship? Did it increase or decrease your respect for them?

Read John 13:37-8; 18:25-7; and 21:15-19 and take a moment to sit quietly with the words.

To ponder

Jesus made clear that failure did not mean you had no future – or that you could not be involved in the work of building his kingdom on earth. Hilary Brand suggests that “perhaps he knew that failure and shame could be as much a means of grace and growth as the most wonderful blessing.”

- Think about times in your life when you felt you had failed or when you had to admit a weakness in front of others. What impact did it have on you and those around you?
- Think of a time you grew (in responsibility, in courage, in faith, etc). What precipitated that change? Did the growth come through strength or weakness?

Clip

If you have access to the film, watch from 1:45:40 (just after ‘I’ll think of something’) to 1:50:07 (after ‘the north wind got weary and went on its way’).



While you watch, look out for images or symbols that might have special meaning for Christians. A clue – think of images we often associate with the Holy Spirit.

To ponder

Père Henri chooses in his Easter sermon to focus on Christ’s humanity, rather than his divinity. Often, we struggle (quite rightly!) to wrap our heads around the mystery that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. Do you tend to think of Jesus in terms of his humanity – or his divinity? Which feels more comfortable? Which receives more attention in, for instance, the songs we sing at church, or the way we talk about Jesus in our prayers? What are the dangers

of focusing on Jesus' humanity or divinity at the expense of the other?

Wrapping up

Think back over the Lent course (or as much of it as you've been able to engage with!). What are the conversations that have struck you or stuck in your mind? Are there areas where God might be encouraging you to grow?

Hilary Brand suggests recipes for a 'Chocolate Feast' when the course is finished. Sadly, we won't be able to gather for such a feast just yet – but do have some chocolate to celebrate in the meantime!

Prayer

Lord, our God, whose divinity was seen in your full humanity,
send the wind of your Spirit to stir us to change,
send the fire of your Spirit to lighten our spirits,
send the dove of your Spirit to help us be at peace with ourselves.
Take our weaknesses and turn them into opportunities.
Take our shame and use it to make us strong.
Help us to be fully human,
that in being fully who you made us to be, the divine might enter in.
In the name of the mysterious, troublesome, healing and affirming
Christ. **Amen.**

Thank you for engaging with this year's Lent course. It's been a pleasure to share with you – albeit not necessarily in the ways we anticipated! May the joy of the resurrection be yours this Easter.

These notes have been produced by the Revd Naomi Oates and are based upon Christ and the Chocolaterie: A Lent Course © Hilary Brand (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2007).