

Bible study 3
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Keeping going and not giving up !

The topic of our conference is continuity in treatment.

How can I maintain it?

Continuity in the care of patients is important for the success of any treatment plan.
A relationship of trust with the patient is a crucial basis for this.

Kathy Webb-Peploe drew our attention to this very apt quotation by Helen Salisbury, a general practitioner, on the Conference Invitation. She encapsulated the value on continuity of care well, when she said : "*It's much easier to ask for help from someone you've already met, and to trust they'll respond. Not everyone has the reassurance someone is looking after them.*"

That is so true and so important for our patients.

Paul Tournier wrote in 1962 : "*The essential part of psychotherapy is listening, long and passionate listening, with love and respect and with a true effort to understand. It is the effort to go beyond the apparent and to discover the hidden or distant causation*". (To understand each other)
And a little earlier in the same book, he wrote : "*It is impossible to over-emphasize the immense need men have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood.*"

While it is a truly great need we have as human beings, to be listened to and understood, it is also necessary to listen and understand.

This is important in every relationship.

I would like to apply this to how we relate with God.

I think that God can meet these needs of we humans.
In that we can tell Him everything and He listens to us, and in that we can listen to what He wants to tell us.

The fact that this relationship can be present over the course of time, rather than be a single experience or sporadic events gives it deeper and more lasting meaning.

I am expressing my personal experience, because not everyone has yet experienced it for themselves.

Continuity in my relationship with God, staying with him, is important for me.

Continuity requires concentration on something, making a decision and sticking to it.

Nowadays there are more and more offers and possibilities. The question arises: what am I doing, what am I spending my time and energy on?

This wealth of possibilities has many advantages, but also difficulties.

The abundance of media and possibilities sometimes feels overwhelming to me, as regarding the information I can get.

How can I practice continuity, make a consistent decision and stick to it?

Even today, with all our knowledge and possibilities, we are faced with the question of what gives our lives meaning and continuity and what can we hold on to?

There are so many offers that promise help. For example, internet-courses for self-realization, for success in life, for health or fulfillment.

The question is : Who or what can really help me?

Help when things go differently than I had hoped, when unforeseen things happen, when a problem remains or fears and hopelessness take over.

In the Gospel of Mark, chapter 7, verses 24-30, we see a woman from Syro-Phoenicia who comes to Jesus with a major issue.

' From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. He entered a house and would have no one know it. Yet He could not be hidden.

For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet.

The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race. And she begged Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

Jesus said to her, "Let the children first be filled. For it is not fitting to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

She answered, "Yes, Lord. Yet the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

Then He said to her, "For this answer, go your way. The demon has gone out of your daughter."

When she had come to her house, she found the demon had gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.'

This woman comes to Jesus with a problem that is extremely important to her, she cannot be deterred, she is on the verge of despair.

Her daughter is suffering and needs help.

Does she get immediate help for her request?

No, Jesus seems to decline her request and even reject her.

How does she react?

Does she leave disappointed and hurt? Is she losing hope of receiving help from Jesus?

Does she despair because Jesus apparently does not want to or cannot grant her request?

I am amazed by her reaction.

She recognizes Jesus' answer that he came to help the Jews first, his people, and she is not one of them and therefore has no right to receive help from him.

She humiliates herself, recognizes that she has no right to his help.

Yet she does not give up, she won't let up. She is inventive, clever, also driven by her distress for her daughter, so that she boldly continues to plead.

She even finds an image that fits Jesus' answer and legitimizes her request.

Yes, even if she does not belong to the children, to the people of God, even if she belongs to the dogs, to remain in Jesus' image, yes, even then, something would still fall away for her from the help and blessings that Jesus has for his people, just as something falls away from the children for the dogs under the table.

The woman persists in her plea despite apparent unsuccessfulness.

She perseveres, she does not give up in her pleading and in her faith that Jesus can and will help her.

With this she impresses Jesus. He is impressed and touched by the persistence of her pleading and her faith.

In Matthew chapter 15, verse 28, the parallel text : *"Jesus answers her : 'Woman, your faith is great; it will be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed from that moment."*

Jesus healed her daughter. The woman's perseverance led to the best result.

This example shows me that persistence and not giving up, not letting go, is the right thing to do. God wants that from me.

There are different challenges in every life and in every profession. Be it work-related, family-related, interpersonal or health-related.

How can I stay close to Jesus?

A very practical help for me are certain words in the Bible, some of which I have memorized.

The following excerpt from Philippians, chapter 4, verses 4-7, for example, is always a wonderful guide for me :

' Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,

present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

In everyday life, at work and in times of difficulty, these words can be an encouragement, a boost of energy, a nudge towards patience and a reason for joy.

However, I realize that staying close to God doesn't happen automatically or is not so easy.

Continuity means "consistency", "steadiness", "constant progression".

The only one who had this complete continuity in his relationship with God, his Father, was Jesus.

And yet I can keep trying and not give up, through all the ups and downs.

Even in seemingly hopeless situations, as the woman from Syro-Phoenicia did.

And because I know that God knows my situation best and I know that he loves me and desires to hear from me, I can also bring him my complaints and questions.

Even this requires me to take hold of this knowledge and press into it. Otherwise, I may not receive that promised peace described in the scripture passage above."

Here is a small example from my life :

A few years ago, I had an unpleasant cold for a long time and that made it difficult for me to work.

My mother-in-law had leukemia, but her treatment seemed to be failing.

Unfortunately, I couldn't see her for a long time because of my cold. As she continued to decline, I wanted to visit her again.

I therefore asked my practice to cancel my consultation the following day.

That same day, my boss told me on the phone that it would be better if we parted ways.

A dismissal was a blow that I hadn't expected.

I had a term of notice of 6 months, so I still had some time to work there.

I asked myself: „Why did God let it come to this? “

The next day I went with my husband to see my mother-in-law in hospital and we were still able to have a good conversation with her.

It was indeed the last time I saw her that she was still conscious. After that I was able to visit her in the palliative care unit, where she was very well looked after, but when I arrived she was no longer in a good state of consciousness. She died a few days later, after we had been with her again.

In that situation, I experienced God's help.

His word was my support, my sustenance and my foundation, also when I went to work.

It set my heart free so that I could work with joy and have a good relationship with my patients, coworkers and even my boss.

As I read my Bible, many words spoke to me in particular.

For example, words from the Book of Revelation, found in chapter 1, verses 17-18 :

„When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. And He placed His right hand on me and said, 'Do

*not be afraid; I am the First and the Last and the Ever-living One.
I died, but see, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.'*

I realized that my life does not depend on people, what I have been always inclined to think, but on the Almighty God.

God guided me through the whole time with His Word, for which I am so grateful to Him.

Eventually my boss offered to withdraw my dismissal. But God had already prepared another job for me.

With this new job, I now have more time to look after my mother and even go on assignments abroad, something that had been close to my heart for a long time.
That would not have been possible in my previous jobs.

This showed me God's wise and gracious guidance.
I always want to remember this with deep gratitude.

Constantly holding on to God and clinging to Him in difficult situations allows us to experience God's intervention, just as the woman from Syro-Phoenicia did.

During this conference, we are looking at the issue of continuity.

Persevering in the treatment of patients and in the relationship with God ultimately leads to a good result. What is meant by this can vary from case to case.

Turning to God again and again and trusting in his power and love is something I want to keep doing, even in situations that seem hopeless.

As far as continuity in the Bible is concerned, I would now like to conclude with two quotations that emphasize the importance of holding fast:

➤ The first from Psalm 73, verses 23-26 :

*,Nevertheless, I am continually with You;
You hold me by my right hand.
You will guide me with Your counsel,
And afterward receive me to glory.
Whom have I in heaven but You
And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.
My flesh and my heart fail;
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. '*

➤ The second from the Gospel of John, chapter 8, verses 31-32 :

« Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'».

