

Aidan's Way Day 17

Anam Cara

Thank you for joining me in prayer on this the seventeenth day of my three-week pilgrimage from Iona to Lindisfarne in the footsteps of Saint Aidan, praying the Bible together each day in our usual way. Today I am continuing along Cuthbert's Way, meandering along the banks of the River Teviot through places with such wonderful names: Harestanes, Dere Street, Grubbit Law, Green Humbleton, and Wideopen Hill on my way to Kirk Yetholm, which is excitingly, after two-and-a-half weeks crossing Scotland, just a mile from the border with England.¹

(Want to know more about this unique series on pilgrimage? Check out the special introductory day, "An Introduction to Pilgrimage").

Pause

*As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly,
to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.*

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

High King of Heaven, would You walk with me and talk with me as I seek to follow in the footsteps of Your servant Aidan today? I have set my heart on pilgrimage, so challenge me and change me, cleanse and rearrange me, until the fire that burned in Aidan's heart, burns brightly in mine.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's love as the rock of my life today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's pilgrim people in the words of Psalm 18:

I love you, LORD;
you are my strength.
The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my saviour;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.
He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.
I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and he saved me from my enemies.

Psalm 18:1-3 (NLT)

Pause and pray

As I continue along Cuthbert's Way, and look forward to being reunited with friends and family soon, I am thinking today about the importance of relationships in my spiritual journey...

Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armour, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

1 Samuel 18:3-5 (ESVUK)

A major marker of spiritual health both in the Bible and in the Celtic tradition is deep human relationship. Jonathan loved David 'as his own soul'. Mary shared the joy of pregnancy with Elizabeth. Jesus had three best friends amongst his own disciples to whom he turned for help (Mark 14:34). Saint Columba came to Iona on the advice of his 'anam cara' - or soul friend - and created a culture of deep spiritual friendship across his many communities. His friend Comgall, founder of Bangor Abbey, taught that 'a person without a soul friend is like a body without a head.' As for Cuthbert, on whose trail I am walking, he maintained a lifelong soul friendship with a monk called Herbert who lived 120 miles away in the English Lake District. At least once a year this spiritual giant travelled a full week from here to Derwentwater simply to spend time with his friend. And remarkably these two companions, who journeyed together through life, died on the same day, 20th March 687.

Ask

I pray now for a close Christian friend, asking the Holy Spirit to give me a specific word of encouragement for them today.

Pause and pray

Since relationships are so vital to my spiritual health and growth, they are also my primary place of spiritual attack. Is there someone with whom I need to arrange an honest conversation, a time of prayer, or even just a fun night out?

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage I listen for a particular word or phrase that the Holy Spirit is highlighting to me today...

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1 Samuel 18:3-5 (ESVUK)

What word or phrase jumped out at me from these verses?

I am struck by the fact that Jonathan and David made a 'covenant'. They weren't just convivial, they didn't just 'hang out', they were intentional and committed to journeying together for years to come. Ray Simpson, founder of the Community of Aidan and Hilda, sets out a number of practical pointers for building such meaningful relationships. Soul friends, he says, should meet on a regular basis in a disciplined way to pray, to find comfort and strength; to apply the gospel to each area of their lives; and to discern God's direction for their future.²

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Humble King, sometimes I find it much easier to yield to You than to the people You've placed around me. I kid myself that I can love You without loving them, be forgiven by You without forgiving them, and worship You without 'submitting to [others] out of reverence for Christ' (Eph. 5:21). And so, instead of yielding in prayer 'vertically' to You now, I yield 'horizontally' to others, asking You to show me someone from whom I should seek counsel, or to whom I could give service today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in 1 John that:

If we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

1 John 4:12 (MSG)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.*

*Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.*

*Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.*

Amen.

¹You can follow Pete's pilgrimage and hear the occasional song inspired by the journey on 'The Pilgrim Podcast' available at www.PeteGreig.info.

²Ray Simpson's full list is available in *Saint Aidan's Way of Mission*, (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2016), p38.