

Friends

I have had an unusual number of encounters with ambulances over the last few days. I always feel a moment of heightened adrenaline as I try to assess where the siren is coming from, and which manoeuvre I can most helpfully make.

Pulling over to the side is often the right decision, but you can risk damaging your tyres on unfamiliar verges. Sometimes as well, you are better off getting out of the way entirely and that was the decision I took today when the lights had changed and I felt (correctly!) that I had time to turn across the junction before the ambulance got to it.

As I looked in the rear-view mirror with some sense of satisfaction, I saw the ambulance tear across the junction a good five seconds after I had decided to cross. I wondered, how often do I get out of people's way spiritually, and how often am I tempted to stand in the middle of the road and encourage them to think what I think.

Jesus rarely told people what to think. He told the disciples sometimes, when he felt they should have known better, and perhaps the Sermon on the Mount can be seen as quite prescriptive, but often he would simply tell stories and then get out of the way so that people could do their own thinking about what those stories meant. I wonder what is more important to our development as Jesus' people: the full theological understanding of the meaning behind the parable of the Good Samaritan, for example, or the wrestling with what it might mean from our own understanding, and therefore what it tells us about God. After all, however thoroughly we understand the idea of the ambulance service, it's only when we dial 999 and the paramedics show up that we start to have a real experience of what their response is all about. Based on that experience, we either believe the ambulance service to be a good thing, or a bad thing, but it's the experience that counts.

Wrestling with the meaning of the parables by interpreting them through the lens of our own lives is how we really come to know and understand God, and that means sometimes we have to step aside from the clever and the learned and get out of our own way so that we can hear God speak.

God bless, Vicci