

[Listen to *Speak O Lord* by Keith and Kristyn Getty first]

Hello, my name is Catherine from the table of Anna in Women's 28.

*Speak, O Lord as we come to You.* I love that song - every time I hear it, it speaks of my desire to hear from our wonderful God and to have Him make me more like His son Jesus.

It also reminds me of the Cursillo tripod which helps us in our spiritual walk as well as encouraging us to witness to others. I'm talking of course of piety, study and apostolic action. Now, the song doesn't take them in quite the right order, so I'm going to mix the verses up a bit.

The second verse asks God to teach us obedience, reverence, and humility - to test our thoughts and attitudes. When you really think about those lines - it's rather scary. I know that I'm often (more often than not, probably) none of those things - obedient, reverent or humble. And actually asking God to check out my thoughts and attitudes - well - I'm just really, really grateful for God's mercy and grace!

I believe this verse covers the tripod leg of piety because we have to spend time with God, in order for us to learn and be tested. God teaches and tests all the time, but with so many distractions and other things which need to be done, we don't actually learn anything unless we stop and devote some regular time to listening. A few years ago, I decided that I really needed to spend regular time with God, reading His Word, praying, and just generally setting a time aside for Him and me. But I discovered that for me, fitting it in during the day just didn't work - there was always something else that needed to be done, or I wasn't in the mood - there was almost always a reason it didn't happen.

Now, I'm not a morning person at all, and never have been - just ask my mother! However, due to a series of weird events, I have found myself getting up between 5 and 6 almost every morning in order to spend time with God. We have morning coffee together - I need it! He teaches, and I learn. He tests, and I learn more. I'm still so much a work in progress - but that time enables me to be refreshed by His mercies, new every morning. It has opened

my eyes (sometimes very slowly), and is definitely growing my mustard seed of faith. Getting up at that time every morning is really NOT easy and my brain is not always working the very best it could be, but when I remember what Jesus went through for me, I have absolutely no excuse not to give up just an extra hour in bed. Although most of the time it's a personal commitment for me to grumble out of bed, and trust me there are times when I grumble, God does help, by doing things like giving me a devotion I'm really excited about, or waking my bladder at an appropriate time. :)

A second way I've found to listen to God, and learn from him is to have a mini-personal retreat. I turned 50 this year, and as this milestone birthday approached I felt that my life was coming to a turning point. Not just in age, but also in my job and career, my family life, my Christian walk - all sorts of things felt like they were stagnating, or coming to an end, or seemed to have no purpose. So, in September I retreated with God for 2 days over a weekend - where I spent time working through a great book called *Made for This* by Jennie Allen - and I prayed, reflected, read, and listened. Jennie relays a prayer in this book that she and her husband began praying, which really resonated with me - and I want to share it with you. She prayed, "From this point on I am living for the moment when I will face you. I want to get to heaven out of breath, having willingly done anything that You asked me to do. Anything!" (p9) What an awesome way to live! That's why piety - the ongoing, deliberate development of a relationship with the loving God who died so we could have that relationship, is so amazingly important.

Okay – moving on to study, the second leg of the tripod. I believe that the final verse refers to this, as it talks about God renewing our minds, so we can understand His eternal truths, and stand on His promises. You can't stand on anything you don't know or understand. I've always been a reader, but in the past couple of years my reading has varied immensely from the fiction which I used to only read (and still fit in) to reading all kinds of non-fiction material about things such as prayer, the Bible, my purpose in God's world, and so on. There is so much great material out there - but if reading's not your thing, then there's heaps and heaps of really good videos on YouTube - I really like the Bible Project, which is short discussions about various books and themes in the Bible. Truly awesome stuff. But

I've discovered that it's not just reading which excites me, it's the studying! I know that might sound weird for many of you - but I really enjoy it.

There are all sorts of ways to study. Not long after I had become a Cursillista, I accepted the position to lead our Kid's Learning Time, (which we call KLT), which has been a constant source of study material. We are extremely blessed to have quite a few children coming to our church, which I think also places a huge responsibility on us to make sure that what they are taught is correct. I personally think this is almost more important than checking what is taught to adults - adults can, and should, take some responsibility for their own knowledge of theology - but children don't have that option and the foundations of their Christian walk is laid at this age. It needs to be Truth. This means that as I prepare a lesson for a class, I end up studying, in a small way, the topic we'll be teaching - and I usually learn something new.

Moving from children's lessons to a more structured studying began about 3 years ago, as people, my non-Christian friends in particular, asked questions I didn't know how to answer, but wanted to be able to. So I looked for books which would teach me the answers, and enable me to discuss various topics from a Christ-centred viewpoint. The more I knew, the more I wanted to know - on all sorts of different topics, and the upshot of that is that I'm now over halfway through a degree in Theology. I don't know what I'll do with the degree when I've completed it, but I'm sure God has a plan for it - and I'm really loving the learning. Actually, did you know that the word theology - which I had always taken (not that I'd thought about it a lot) to be something to do with ministers and hard topics about religion - comes from the Greek words 'theo' meaning God and logos which means speech or word. Therefore - it is literally speaking about God. So really everyone is a theologian - it's just whether we're correct in our words or not that is the actual issue. And studying as God speaks makes it possible us to work on being correct as He helps us grasp His eternal Truths and enables us to stand on His promises and walk His way with Him beside us.

I have found study to be the inspirational part of my journey with God. The more I learn, the more I want to share what I've learned. And the more I share, the more I need to learn to answer those pesky questions that people ask. And then I need to share some more -

and THAT leads me on to the third and final leg of the Cursillo tripod – Apostolic action, and the first verse of our song.

When we receive the food of God's Holy Word, when it is planted deep in us, it shapes and fashions us into His likeness, so that Christ's light might be seen today in our ACTS of love and DEEDS of faith. Apostolic action is a hard and scary, but oh so necessary part of our Christian walk. Very scary and very hard sometimes, but very necessary. That prayer from Jennie Allen I read out earlier - "*I want to get to heaven out of breath, having willingly done anything that You asked me to do.*" Willing action. Willingly stepping out of one's comfort zone to act is a really difficult thing. However, we know and serve a God who made us and loved us so much that He willingly suffered horribly before dying in our place - how can we not share that to those who don't know Him, or aren't sure if they do? How can we not encourage those who are seeking, or those who are comfortable where they are? Well, that's how I feel anyway - although being me, you wouldn't always know that's how I feel. Sometimes it's a bit too challenging.

However, apostolic action is really just reaching out to others in some way. I envy the way some people do hospitality seemingly effortlessly and always have people visiting; and those who serve without seeming to even notice they're doing it. I'm not made that way. So I do things like lead the KLT ministry at church. After a recent Christianity Explored event, the people on my table decided to continue meeting as a Small Group, so I found what I thought might be a good Bible study tool and I lead that group. I've also been leading (there's a theme happening here) a small group of 5 women in a monthly discussion around some topical questions which encourages them to deepen their faith in God, and look at ways they might live out their Christian life a bit differently. This group has been running for about 3 years now, and even though we meet only once a month, we have developed friendships and support one another; and because of that group, some of those women did their Cursillo last year, which I was extremely excited about. Recently I felt there were others who might also be encouraged by such a group, so I talked to another 5 women, and because each one said, "Yes", I now have a second group which will be meeting for the first time next Saturday, which I'm also very excited about.

Despite these seemingly successful stories, I often get depressed about my failures with apostolic action. I know a lot of people who don't follow Christ, and I invited 4 of these to come along to the Christianity Explored sessions I mentioned before. They all said, "no thanks". I have prayed for some of them to be healed – and they have been - but they're still not interested in hearing about Jesus. Some of them say they're Christians, but they don't pray, don't read the Bible, or go to Church, and they shut me down if I bring up any topic which might disturb the life they're currently living. I get discouraged at the seeming lack of knowledge which appears to be sinking into the minds of our children who attend KLT, and despair at the effectiveness of the various groups I lead.

And then I go to my Group Reunion (which meets once a fortnight), and I'm encouraged and inspired by what God is doing in the lives of the others. I'm able to share what's been happening in my life, and I'm reminded once again that God is in control – not me. And His sense of timing is not mine – I'm much more a "things need to be finished now" style of person. How blessed am I that this is not the case for God?! 😊

Talking about Group Reunions - I really can't encourage you enough to find and join one. My group has changed members a number of times in the nearly 5 years I've been a part of it, but the friendships I've made as part of that group are an amazing expression of God's love for me. And no matter how I feel when I turn up for a meeting – whether I've had a bad day, bad week, or quite the opposite, I'm praising God as I drive home afterwards! Being able to discuss and share one's Christian walk, however it looks, with others who are on their own walks with Christ, is one of the most uplifting experiences I know. Plus, because you know you'll be discussing what you've studied, or been inspired by, or what actions you have undertaken – I find it's an encouragement to do something rather than put it off for another time. There's an accountability that comes when you are in a group which shares as Group Reunions do. And the topics covered are the tripod, so you can talk about when you most felt God, whether it was at a low when you really needed something, or at time when things were so good you just had to sing His praises. You can share what you've been reading and learning – which I feel almost Jeremiah-like forced to do. And then there's the action – and we come to see how something relatively simple like making meals for a person who's unwell, or supporting your child through a difficult time, or something a bit more

challenging like praying for a work colleague, or starting a new study group – can all be apostolic action. Support through this group is awesome! I can't speak highly enough of being part of one.

You know, it's pretty obvious when you read the Bible, that when God speaks, things happen – He speaks in Genesis, and the world and all its wonders come into being. He spoke to Moses in Exodus and the 10 Commandments were engraved into the world's history. God spoke, and men prophesied, kings fell, and armies were defeated. And then the Word became flesh and lived among us, and continues to speak even to this very day. However, God has also given us an amazing gift of freedom to choose, and so we need to choose Him. We need to choose to, as the song says, come to Him to receive His Word - we need to come, to make time for God to plant His truth, to shape and fashion us, so that Christ's light might be seen today

Speak O Lord, and let us listen.

De Colores