

Thoughts for the Day: 18-24 October 2021

by Jo Willis

Motorhome Diaries

Monday 18th

Motorhome Diaries - New Skills

We purchased a motorhome back in October 2019. This week's thoughts are a collection of things we have learned from our new experiences.

Our very first outing, as recommended by those in the know, was only an hour away to a National Trust Site outside Huntingdon. The idea is not to travel too far in case everything goes wrong - so you can get home easily! We arrived at the site with no issues, and parked up.

The first thing to do is to hook up to electricity. When we hired a van to check whether we liked the experience, this was a very easy thing to do, and so we were not expecting any difficulties. We connected the lead at both ends, and switched on - nothing. Oh.

We unplugged and tried again. Still nothing. Perhaps we hadn't turned something on in the motorhome itself, so various switches were pressed, and unpressed, in different orders, and then unplugged, and pressed again, then reversed, but whatever we did - no power.

We (well, I) resorted to reading the manual for the motorhome - doing exactly what it said, in the right order.

Still nothing. Maybe I had not read it right, so we read it out loud to each other. And then we debated what actual words meant: 'When it says the main switch, does that actually mean the main switch that we can see, or is there a main switch that is hidden from sight that is a secret?'

Eventually, after an hour of faffing around, Rod resorted to a more physical approach - and gave the lead going into the motorhome a hearty shove. And, hey presto, we had power! We just hadn't pushed the plug in far enough to make a connection.

Lessons learned: perseverance eventually paid off, and sometimes we just need an extra push to achieve success. And reading the manual did actually point us in the right direction!

Is there anything going on in your life that has required perseverance? Do you need just an extra push to get over the line? Would reading the Bible give you a steer?



'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.'

(Luke 6. 39-40)

Tuesday 19th

Motorhome Diaries - Making the most of the present

Following our success of hooking up, we had a walk in the nearby meadows, and then thought about having some food. I had the foresight to include some tins in our kitchen in case we wanted to cater for ourselves. So, I proceeded to start preparing our evening meal, only to discover that I had not had the foresight to include a tin opener, which rather scuppered that idea. Not prepared enough!

No problem. I had checked that there were two pubs within a 10-minute walk, and both served food. We set off. What I had not taken into account was that we were staying on a Sunday night and the first pub had stopped serving food at 4.00pm that afternoon. No problem - Rod wasn't keen on the beer they were serving anyway, so we moved to the second pub. A slight improvement in the offering of beer, but still no food - their kitchen had stopped serving half an hour previously. Oh.

So, we had some choices. We could walk another half hour to the next village in the hope that the restaurant there would serve us. No - we were already tired. We could have gone back to the campsite and begged a tin opener from another camper. But we were now in a nice warm pub, so we decided to stay and have a drink. And we dined on peanuts, Quavers and pork scratchings! Point for discussion - in which order would you have chosen to eat these to represent starter, main and dessert?!

We could have been in a very grumpy mood as everything was going wrong, but we chose to embrace the situation and had a nice evening even if it wasn't as anticipated. Quavers have never tasted so good!

Sometimes we have choices in how we react to a situation. Can it be changed? If not, can we embrace it and not react negatively? Can God help you do that?



'Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you.' (Psalm 55. 22)

Wednesday 20th

Motorhome Diaries - The basics of life

Our second outing took place in November 2019 - a trip to Suffolk staying on a site next door to a pub (this time I checked the opening hours of the kitchen!).

On arrival, we hooked up successfully (lesson learnt), had a cuppa, then went off for a walk around the local area (more of that tomorrow). We returned to the motorhome around 5.00pm, and settled down to read (me) or doze (Rod) until it was time for a meal in the pub.

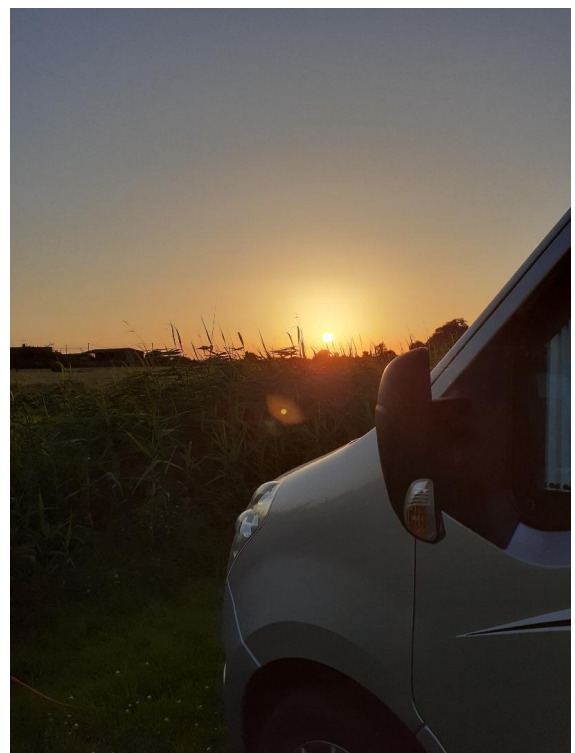
It was cold. It was very cold (about 4-5 degrees outside), and you have to remember that motorhomes do not come

with cavity wall insulation. So, I attempted to put on the heating. I read the manual first and followed the instructions. Nothing. An error message appeared on the control panel so I Googled what that might mean. It meant the heating wasn't working. Oh.

OK, let's make the best of this. So, I sat with the duvet wrapped around me and Rod carried on dozing under his duvet. I got colder and colder until I really understood what it meant to be chilled to the bone; I was shivering fairly violently, despite wearing my coat and being wrapped in a duvet.

So, I woke Rod, and for the first time ever, pleaded with him to take me to the pub! As we walked across the campsite, there was frost forming on the ground, but the inside of the pub was warm and welcoming and we had a good hot meal. I dreaded going back to sleep in the van, but interestingly, being tucked up under the duvet in bed was perfectly warm, and we slept well.

It made me incredibly grateful for our warm houses, and much more concerned about the plight of the homeless who don't have the option of warming up in a pub, or having a warm bed underneath them, or even



having extra layers that they can wear to keep warm. It is good to be reminded to be thankful for some of the basics of life.

'Go and celebrate because of all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household.'

(Deuteronomy: 26. 11)

Thursday 21st

Motorhome Diaries - The kindness of strangers

On the walk on our arrival in Suffolk, we followed a path that was meant to take us to the coastline. But as we approached some fields, we heard a voice raised in complaint. To give context, it had been raining that week (a lot!) and everywhere was very wet. And some areas were flooded.

A middle-aged couple were trying to walk along the path towards us but the water was really quite deep, and despite the fact that both were wearing wellingtons, it was close to the top of their boots. So, the wife had decided to leave the path and walk in the field as the water seemed not to be as deep. Sadly, she discovered this to be a misconception and was struggling to make any progress, whilst her husband made helpful comments such as, "Well, I told you not to go that way!". We turned and went back the way we had come!

The next day we wanted to walk through Minsmere (an RSPB reserve) through to Dunwich. We set off only to discover that part of the road we had to follow was also flooded and was deeper than our walking boots could cope with. We returned to the campsite and were talking to another couple about our dilemma, when a handyman who was around heard us and offered to drive us through the water (the deep bit was only about 100m long) as he had a job along that road. We gratefully got in his van, were driven through the flood and set off on our walk once on the other side.

Five or so hours later, we returned, hoping the water would have gone down as there had been no more rain - but no, it was still significantly deeper than our boots. Oh.



As we were contemplating what to do, a car approached and the couple in it asked if we would like a lift through the water. We had just passed them taking off all their muddy walking clothes before getting in their car. We were very grateful, accepted and opened their back door to get in.

In muddy conditions, you can imagine what our footwear and clothes were like. And we were greeted with the sight of the cleanest interior of a car I have ever seen - it was

absolutely immaculate, as if new. “We can’t mess up your car,” we protested - but they insisted, and were so very generous about it. They drove us through, and we arrived back at the campsite with dry feet, thanks to two very kind strangers.

Are there times when we can be kinder and more generous to strangers that we encounter?

‘Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.’ (Hebrews 13. 2)

Friday 22nd

Motorhome Diaries - Confined spaces

We have learnt much more about how to get the best out of our motorhome over the last few months, and I have even (to my great excitement) learnt how the heating operates. But there are ongoing issues we have to deal with.

We have to live in a confined space, so it is very necessary to be tidy in order to be able to cope. This does not come naturally to either of us, but we make an effort to ensure most things are in the right place most of the time. Except when travelling, when everything has to be put away otherwise it goes flying around the van. The grill pan has to be wrapped up, the slightly loose cupboard is taped up, crockery has a towel around it to stop it rattling, and so on.

Similarly, you have to get along with the person you are sharing the space with! You are in close proximity all the time, so it is more difficult to allow each other 'space'! A friend of ours who has travelled around Europe in their motorhome gave us some very good advice: "You can't afford to let disagreements fester". Oh.

I have noticed that we both are more tolerant of each other's foibles when we are away. It sometimes means making more of an effort not to be annoyed, but so far we have had no arguments (not even when we ran out of gas so there was no morning cup of tea - which *might* have been my fault!) And if we can do that when in the motorhome, why can this not spill over into normal life? And if we can do that with each other, maybe we can do it with other relationships that we may find difficult.

Are there times when we should make more effort not to allow disagreements to fester? Who comes to mind when that is suggested? Could you make more of an effort to improve that relationship?

'Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.'
(Proverbs 17. 9)



Saturday 23rd

Motorhome Diaries - A secret club

I am going to let you into a secret that may see me drummed out of the Caravan and Motorhome club (yes, there is such a thing and we are members). We discovered that when we are driving around in the motorhome, drivers of other motorhomes wave acknowledgement to you when they pass - just a quick raising of the hand as they whizz past on the other side of the road.

I really like this and have embraced it, so I wave to every motorhome (not to caravans, please note) when we pass, even if they can't see us on the other side of the motorway. It is like being in a secret club that is only available to those in the know. I should point out that Rod thinks it is ridiculous and refuses to participate!

It has made me wonder, though, if that is how some folk view the Church and those of us who are members. Are we viewed as a secret club, where only those who are in the know of the Good News can be members? Oh.

Any group of which we are not a member can seem closed, or scary or even unwelcoming. Lots of the initiatives that the church does to open the door to those who are not members are aimed to break down those barriers: the exhibitions (inside and outside), the beer and carols service, mother and toddler or youth groups, to name a few. Are there friends we could invite along to any of these to help reduce potential fears?

'Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not only me but also my Father who sent me.'
(Mark 9. 37)



Sunday 24th

Motorhome Diaries - Opening our eyes

Travelling around in the motorhome has allowed us to visit many places that we wouldn't otherwise have probably chosen to visit. All have provided interesting memories, such as walking the Manifold Trail in the Peak District. The map said it was eight miles in length with a cafe half way along, so we thought we would walk half way, have lunch and then return. The map lied (or possibly it was our map reading skills) as it was nearly eight miles to the cafe. We were tired that night!

Sandwich in Kent is a beautiful little town, mainly known for having a prestigious golf course and being one of the Cinque Ports. On our visit, we discovered so much history about the town (which used to be on the coast, when the Isle of Thanet was actually an island), as well as it being

fascinating just to walk around. A population of around 5000, Sandwich also has about 40 pubs! We liked it!!

Bodiam in East Sussex has a wonderful castle, a good pub (there seems to be a theme here) and we also had a very informative guided tour of the local vineyard. Cantley in Norfolk introduced us to visits to Lowestoft and Norwich, along with the local very large sugar beet factory. And the motorhome park in Canterbury Park and Ride provides a direct bus to the cricket ground. Oh ho!

How much do we appreciate what is on our doorstep? How easy is it to overlook what is near, and to want to visit far off countries and exotic locations. We are so lucky with the choices we have, but we should also to be mindful of those who don't have such choices: refugees, those living in

poverty, people in areas of conflict and violence, those who struggle to leave their own home. Lord, help us not take our lives for granted.



Where next? As you read this, we should be returning from a trip to North Wales - I wonder what lessons we will learn there? Maybe we can get the solar panel to work!

'Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always

giving thanks to God the Father for everything.' (Ephesians 5. 20)

PS The verse before this says: 'Don't get drunk on wine'. Perhaps I mentioned pubs too frequently.