

Our Remarkable Privilege

A catastrophic event breaches the boundaries of normalcy and security. We are buffeted by mind-boggling news. That night a group gathers to read and pray Scripture, and we are amazed. The week's text unexpectedly reveals a window through which we see the dramatically relevant promises of God.

A father stays close to his son's bedside through the long nights of physical decline, knowing that death is imminent. With unbearable anguish he thumbs the pages of his Bible, finds and reads aloud the Psalms; and it is here that he finds succor and strength to stay the course.

The social and scientific data make a compelling case for those of us who are better fed to accept our responsibility to end hunger. But we see the bar graphs and hear the shameful, shocking statistics and feel powerless and numbed. Yet with remarkable clarity and urgency Jesus says, "You give them something to eat." So, in spite of our bewilderment, we are compelled to find places to serve, contribute, and work for policies that will make a difference.

The Word overwhelms and undermines the chatter that bewilders, misleads, and sidetracks us. That's why we are obliged to search and study, pray and repeat, talk about and reflect upon, learn and honor Scripture.

Tom Ehrich writes that "many wield the Bible as a weapon against competing groups or viewpoints. By stitching together citations, the Bible-wielders can demolish anyone. A bit of Leviticus, a passage from Genesis, a saying by Jesus, and suddenly they have a doctrine. Scriptures fly like stones in modern Jerusalem.

"That, I believe, is abuse. It is abuse of Scripture, for it drains the Bible of its power to inspire faith. It abuses God's people, for our brokenness and yearnings can never be met by right opinion. It abuses God, for it freezes God in time, space and desire."¹

It is apparent that we can and do misuse the gift of Scripture, but also that we are changed by the text when we bring unlocked hearts and minds to our encounter with it. Reading the Bible is often confounding, discomfiting, and provoking. But it is also frequently the source of spiritual insight, assurance, and the blessings of God's shalom.

What a remarkable privilege it is to attend to the Word and listen for the Spirit's voice. Let's do more of it. Let's do it together.

Neil M. Alexander

President and Publisher

The United Methodist Publishing House

¹From "Rocky" in the email series *On a Journey* by Tom Ehrich. To receive these daily meditations, send your email address to: oaj2000@earthlink.net. Used with permission.