

AS TIME GOES BY

REFLECTIONS AND POEMS FOR THE
YOUNG AT HEART

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Introduction



Time does indeed go by and, in our later years, we tend to reflect on our memories. I'm sure we all have memorable moments which are easy to recapture.

Many of the thoughts in this book grew from events in my own life, whilst some are from happenings to friends or from things I've read which have impacted me. They are simple stories from which I've learnt important truths. Jesus Himself used everyday things and events to teach us and so I dare to follow His example.

Storytelling has always been part of my life. My ancestors were all from the Emerald Isle so perhaps it's the Irish gene manifesting! Suffice to say, my father used to tell us fairytales when we were small, and I loved to listen.

By the age of eleven I had five younger siblings. Most nights we were all packed off to bed as early as six o'clock – probably for some peace and quiet downstairs! Needless to say, although we were upstairs, sleep was not on the agenda. We played great imaginative games and my sister Agnes tells me that every night she eagerly awaited the next episode in my storytelling sagas – all made up as I went along!

Not surprisingly, I eventually became an infant teacher and my ability to tell a story was well used. Next came marriage and four wonderful children of my own, who were, of course, a captive audience!

All my life I'd been a very religious churchgoer, desperately

trying to earn my salvation by my own good deeds. That was a joyless and hard road for, of course, I was always failing. There were more black marks than gold stars on my soul's register!

Then in the 1970s, a totally unexpected thing happened to my husband, Arthur, and me. By a series of what I now see as 'God-incidences' (as opposed to coincidences), we were drawn into the Church's charismatic renewal. For the first time in my life I understood that Jesus had died for me personally, and that salvation could not be earned but is a gift from God, freely given to all who will receive it. We gladly received it, were prayed with, were born again of God's Spirit and our lives were changed forever.

The story I then had to tell was not a fairy story but the most amazingly true and joyful story the world has ever heard. Arthur and I spent the next ten years sharing our good news with many people in the Northeast. After Arthur's death in 1993 I entered the world of broadcasting and for the next fourteen years was a regular contributor on *Morning Thought* programmes, first of all for United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) and then for Radio Solent.

This book has grown from those 'thoughts' and I pray it will be a blessing to those who read it. The prayers at the end of some of the stories are short and simple, but my hope is they will act as a catalyst and that readers will be moved to make their own responses by both listening and talking to the God who loves us all more than we can understand, until the great day comes when we see Him face to face. For time *does* go by, and that day will surely come.



1. *Ours*

The patience and kindness of God amazes me. In the autumn of my life, wonders dawn on me now that I wish I'd seen long ago!

For instance – my childhood was spent in the Northeast of England in a very poor, working-class family. When referring to family members we in the North always used the possessive *our*, saying, 'our dad', 'our mam' and so on. Perhaps it's peculiar to that area, for I've never heard it anywhere else. I'm sure it must have emphasised to us, and to others, our 'belonging-ness', and that is something which every living being needs to feel.

For good or ill, our families gave us our sense of identity. How blessed are those who were nurtured in loving homes; sadly, many are not. But even in the most loving of families we have to admit that, beside the love, we perhaps experienced misunderstandings, disappointments, hurt or other negative things. This is because of our very humanness. However well intentioned, we so often get it wrong.

As a parent I can see the mistakes I made and ruefully wish that I'd done some things differently. Deep down, we all long to belong, to be understood, to be accepted and to be loved for ourselves just as we are, and yet to be nurtured whatever our age, in order to fulfil our potential.

The good news is that we can be!

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, He told them to say, 'Our Father' (Matthew 6:9). In the Aramaic it's

‘our *Abba*’; in English – ‘our Dad’. Jesus was saying, ‘Be intimate with your dad.’ He was also saying, ‘And I am your brother.’ Is not this remarkable? I am astonished at the wonder of it.

Of course we go to the Father through Jesus, but once we have taken that step of faith in Jesus’ finished work on the cross, we are in the family. We have a heavenly Father who understands us better than we understand ourselves. He accepts us and loves us as we are, but loves us too much to *leave* us as we are. His Holy Spirit dwells in us, and works in us to change us to become like our ‘big brother’ Jesus. We are members of God’s own family. We are the most privileged of people. We *belong*.



I belong

*I belong – yes, I belong,
No longer need I wander,
For in my heart I know
That I belong.*

*He calls me His beloved,
His favour rests upon me,
I turn my faltering steps
And journey home.*

*No longer am I an orphan,
My heart can sing this song,
What joy it is to know
That I belong.*

*His name is on my brow,
My home is being prepared,
My Bridegroom is awaiting,
A meal is to be shared.*

*The betrothal now is sealed
by the Holy Spirit of God.
My Beloved is mine
And I am His own,
I belong!*