

## Mind the Gap Major Toni Cartmell

Mind the Gap is a familiar phrase in London's train stations. It is a warning not to trip or fall in that space between the train and the platform. The word gap, in this instance represents the unknown and the invitation is to be aware, with harm prevention in mind. Today I would like to explore the idea of the gap with the intention of understanding it and growing from it.

As I reflected on the Gap I became aware that it represented the space between something that was moving and something stationary. The gap provided a cushion between the two objects which allowed the moving train not to cause injury to the platform or vice versa. Without the gap, the tension and the friction between these two would have caused damage to both the train and the platform.

Seasons also illustrate the idea of the Gap. For most people in colder climates, winter represents to some degree, the absence of life and growth. In autumn, the falling leaves pantomime little deaths to self on our journey of life with Christ. We are ready for rest and to be blanketed as the snow blankets the earth. In the deep recesses of our heart we just want to withdraw and rest and be still. Winter beckons us not as an enemy of life but as a preserver of life. Like the caterpillars cocoon, in the deep stillness of winter, transformation is taking place. Like the gap, it cushions the activity and tensions of autumn's relinquishment of life and the impetuous intensity of springs demand to take hold of life. Winter creates opportunity for us to pay attention to the stillness and the silence within and without. It is a time of tending the soul and strengthening deep relationships. It is a time when activity is lessened and life is renewed.

I don't like the cold. It steals my breath, burns my lungs and chills me to the bone. I have often said I don't like winter but that is changing. I now see the cold, snowy, Canadian winter as God's wisdom and provision for me to hunker down and pay attention to the areas that I neglect because more temperate temperatures invite activity. On those long, dark winter nights, there is nothing like: picking up a book that has long beckoned me to discover it's treasures; or to take a leisurely moment to play backgammon with my husband; or to gaze out the window at the splendor of creation and say thank-you to the Father for the reminder that because of Jesus that I am whiter than the snow; to gaze into the early sunset and marvel at the unspeakable night sky that is willing to bless me every waking day and the moments in these days when I reflect on past seasons and can honestly say, "I hate the cold but I love winter."

Mind the Gap. It is not the absence of anything but the presence of something profoundly meaningful.

### Prayer #1

Lord, it is winter and I don't know quite what to do with myself. I am not used to the stillness; I am not comfortable in it. The blanket of stillness feels heavy, burdensome, and oppressive. There is a gnawing sense, of something deep inside, that wants to capture my attention but I am afraid. I am afraid of what is down there, afraid to let it out. Can I trust you Lord? Is the

persistence of this ache your messenger beckoning me to pay attention? I'm afraid. Do I have to go there? I hear the whisper of His Spirit assuring me, "you don't need to go there today, knowing is enough, and you will know when it is time to open up to those hidden places. In answer to your other question, 'Yes, you can trust me. I love you.'"

Lord, today we pray for those that walk in fear. We bring before you:

- Our friends in Haiti who are fighting for their survival and future. Lord, have mercy.
- Our friends in USA who are in the midst of leadership change. Lord, have mercy.
- For those who have an abundance of food but are starving spiritually. Lord, have mercy.
- For those who are hungry, may they be fed. Lord, have mercy.
- For those who are seeking may they find you. Lord, have mercy.
- For those with material abundance may they be free. Lord, have mercy.
- For those who are comfortable may they be discomfited by your Spirit. Lord, have mercy.
- For those who suffer may they find comfort in you. Lord, have mercy.
- For all of God's children and the world wide church, may we be as Christ who did not think of Himself as equal to God but submitted Himself to both God and others. Lord, have mercy.

## Prayer #2

Lord, I have to confess that I like you up in heaven. I feel safe when I think of you up there working the plan, while I do my part as your servant. I don't mind the distance; I'm very reliable, independent and introverted anyway. Why is it so important that I have a relationship with Jesus? The whole idea of Jesus as my friend is a bit awkward for me. I'm not that good with friendship, sharing myself or staying in touch and lets not even discuss playing, laughing and spontaneity. That's just not me. To be honest, I think there are a lot like me! I think the "Jesus is my friend group" is the minority. Lots of people say that Jesus is their friend but I guess it depends on your definition of friend. Lord, I want Jesus to be my friend because you say it is important but I don't know what that would look like or how to go about it. Will you help me?

Child of mine, I want you to be a friend of Jesus because He and I are one. I am in Him and He is in me. I want you to be friends because Jesus is in you and He wants to share life with you. You've already taken the first step of moving towards a more intimate relationship with Jesus; you've asked me for help and that's what friends do. Friends are about recognition, knowing one another and sharing the same vision. The recognition of one another created your relationship and reading the Bible is a little bit like reading a friend's diary; you learn about who Jesus is through His life. He already knows everything about you! Then, it's about doing life together as you keep inviting Him into the moments, relationships and events of your life. He loves it when you say, "Hey Jesus did you see that? Or "Thanks Jesus, that went better than I expected." He

also likes to listen to your struggles, fears, sorrow along with your gratitude, joy and questions. When you allow yourself to become Jesus' friend; He helps you with the difficult things that are too much for you by yourself. All those little blessings that you want to share with someone; He is always present and listening. Remember, He holds the power and authority of the Triune God and we want you to be not just a servant, or a follower but to enter into the community of God as a friend.

Today we pray for all those:

- Who do not know Jesus. Lord, may they see Him in us.
- Who have turned their hearts away from God. Lord, may they experience Jesus through us.
- Who are hungry for a deeper intimacy with Christ. Lord, may your disciples have eyes to see and ears to listen.
- Who have been hurt by the church or Christians. Lord, send us as instruments of your healing and grace.