FINDING MEAT IN THE MILK

The Importance of a Crisis of Faith in the Spiritual Journey of Frailty in Ageing
1 Corinthians 3:1-3

3 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?

Hebrews 5:11-13

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

1 Peter 2:1-3

2 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.
What is Crisis of Faith?

- Competing Life Experience
- New Positive outcome based on combination of Experience and World View
- Structure of Belief/World View/Theology
- New Negative world view where either Experience or World View is ignored
Crisis of Faith in the Elderly

What are the common issues of experience which the elderly face?

- Grief and Loss
  - Independence
  - Family and social status
  - Decreasing social circle
  - Physical ability
  - Memory recall
- Pain and physical concerns
- Unforeseen financial issues
- Marginalising by society
- Powerlessness in the Decline of Society
Crisis of Faith in the Elderly Cont’d

What is the common faith narrative which the Elderly are familiar with?

- God is Good
- Youth is the Future of Faith
- Wealth and Abundance are God’s ideals
- Faith in Action is the ideal
- God is the Great Healer
- God is impartial
- God always listens to prayer
- You have to be right with God for good things to happen
A Break in the Narrative

- Everyone has a crisis of faith in life
- Crises are both life shattering and thought provoking
- Crises can be big or small
- Crises are for individuals and groups
  - Group crisis usually resolves itself in reformation
- What tools do you use to resolve your crisis and where did it lead?
What a Crisis is not!
‘Crisising’ – an Activity of Faith in Participation in Community

- Missional Ageing – Creating Communities of Hope in Residential Aged Care
- Shared Experiences in resolving ‘Structure vs Experience’ issues.
- Having the ability to retell the story of experience within the structure of faith at the same time having the ability to retell the story of faith within the structure of experience.
- Reminiscing the unknown crises of faith from the past to normalise the process.
- Acknowledging that the process is ongoing and never ends.
- Letting go of the need to share the object of faith belief. It doesn’t need to be my experience even though we share it.
Positive Outcomes from ‘Crisising’ with the Frail Aged

- Whether belief in a deity continued or not (or was found or not), when experience and belief were resolved, the palliative process was more fluid, calm and positive for resident, staff and family holistically.
- Residents faced increased frailty with grace and dignity. Fear was still present, but fears were explored rather than being allowed to hamper the process.
- Communication and verbalisation of wants and the development of an Advanced Care Plan were more vibrant and positively received by family, staff and resident.
- Generally speaking, the earlier in the process crisis resolution occurred, the shorter the palliative process was. However, the resident and family were much more relieved that the process was a short one and there was no guilt for said relief.
- Funerals of these residents, while tinged with sadness of loss, were for more upbeat and reflection was an enjoyable process for both staff and residents who attended.

Data taken over a three year period sampled by 150 residents who had terminal diagnoses and processed issues of belief alongside their diagnosis.
Tools for Crisising

What is needed to facilitate the process?

- Reading Materials - Scriptures
- Engagement with Faith Leaders
- Practice Meditation
  - Faith meditation is different for each belief and the process can be confronting
- Oppositional reading materials
- Sharing faith practices in order to critically reflect upon them.
- Self Awareness – Who am I in this process? Do I participate or am I a casual observer?
Finding Meat in the Milk

The Quest Continues

Thus says the LORD:

“ In an acceptable time I have heard You, And in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You As a covenant to the people, To restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages; That You may say to the prisoners, ‘Go forth,’ To those who are in darkness, ‘Show yourselves.’

“ They shall feed along the roads, And their pastures shall be on all desolate heights. They shall neither hunger nor thirst, Neither heat nor sun shall strike them; For He who has mercy on them will lead them, Even by the springs of water He will guide them.”