

# realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



## Today's Readings:

Repent and live! Ezek 18:25-28  
Make me happy: be united in love. Phil 2:1-11  
Religious stereotypes challenged. Mt 21:28-32

## Next Week:

The rejected stone is the keystone  
Is 5:1-7; Phil 4:6-9; Mt 21:33-43

## In a nutshell

Today's parable reminds us that we are not bound by our past. Whatever has been lacking in our relationship with God, this need not stop us from opening our hearts to God in the present and receiving abundant blessings. Conversely, a positive relationship with God in the past does not make us immune to sinful behaviour in the present.



## When gifts become obstacles

*It is tempting to mistake God's work for our own efforts.*

One day I was at a meeting where eight highly motivated, talented Catholics were gathered, each one who had been instrumental in starting a lay spirituality movement in the Church in Australia. The topic on the agenda was familiar: the start of a new lay initiative in the Church. The discussion became tense, headstrong, heated at times and frustratingly unfruitful. 'Something's wrong,' I thought. Later it occurred to me that it was our reliance on our own human abilities which was our stumbling block. Ironically, we 'knew' too much. We had started movements before, we were determined to do it again. Our eagerness to apply tried and proved formulas of the past was blocking our openness to God's plan in the present.

We needed reminding that the crux of Christian discipleship is not

how 'clever' we are but how willing we are to be led by the Holy Spirit. This is not to deny the role of intelligent planning, nor the value of experience. But it does point to something more fundamental: hearing and responding to the Lord's call, regardless of whether it agrees with the expectations of human logic; a flexibility arising from faith which allows one's plans to change in directions never thought possible. (TP)

*Is there an area of your life in which you find yourself 'bound' by the past (even if that past is positive)? What new response is being asked of you in the present?*

## A change of routine

*One family has found a creative way to improve on their Sunday gatherings.*

My family used to have that obligatory Sunday lunch at Grandma's. But family tensions would come into play and we would all end up irritable with each other. Now we have a new routine. On Sundays we take Grandma down to the local beachside park. We sit in the sun for a couple of hours and sip coffee while the kids run around and my husband and my brothers spend a macho half hour plucking up the courage to go for a swim (in very cold water!). It's better for Grandma because we're more relaxed with her. Instead of being a 'duty', our time with her is a pleasure, and we are creating wonderful family memories in the process. (JC)



church below the rooftops

## Three simple steps of conversion

For those who have 'been away' from the church:

- Get involved with some people in your local parish;
- Learn how to pray again;
- Receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

For those who have been involved in the church for many years:

- Broaden your circles to include people on the fringes of parish life;
- Learn how to pray again;
- Receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

## Think . Talk . Act

Think back over your faith journey... the past ... the present.... What has been good and fruitful? What has been unfruitful, even regrettable? Entrusting yourself to God, take a new step into the future.



**RealPeople** offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

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