



Being oneself

Heather Smith *reflects on* Jeremiah 1:4-10

The prospect of public speaking is a common cause of anxiety, as are job interviews and exams. Jeremiah is a clear example of someone who doubts his ability. He is one in a long line of people who are chosen by God, who feel they can't do what's required of them. Moses resists God's request to speak to Pharaoh, while Jonah is not keen to confront the people of Nineveh.

When it comes to judging our own capabilities and limitations, we often think we're best placed to know what they are. We've lived with ourselves longer than anyone and we're intimately acquainted with all our bad points – and possibly our good. God begs to differ. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." It's quite hard to argue with that. Who can remember anything about themselves before they were even conceived? Other people often recognise what we're capable of when we

can't see it for ourselves. If other human beings can see more in us than we can, how much more can God?

Opportunities are God's way of helping us to be ourselves – the person God made. They may be challenging, but by grasping them we will find out who we really are. God has promised to be with us so we are always safe even if, like Jeremiah, we struggle to believe it. ☺

Creator God, teach us to follow your lead and to take up the challenges we face, trusting in you to sustain us through our fear. Amen.

Make the most of the summer A spiritual spa

by Heather Smith

If you've ever visited a spa, you'll know that the point is to luxuriate in hot water, enjoy a relaxing massage or other treatment and perhaps indulge in a gentle swim, all punctuated by magazine reading by the pool and healthy food and drink. The aim is to take us out of the mundane to a higher place free from our usual stress, as the name of one particular spa in Berkshire – Nirvana – intends to

suggest. We reach the pinnacle of physical relaxation and the implication is that it takes us somewhere beyond just the physical.

And it might work – if you ditch the magazines and let your mind stray to thoughts of God. A relaxed body certainly makes it easier to focus. But perhaps the long days of summer are a good opportunity to create a spiritual spa. Spend a little time with the Bible and see if God shows you something new, enjoy some meditation and relaxed prayer. ☺

“One should never initiate anything that he cannot saturate with prayer.”

Unknown

Walking with Rosie

by Gillian Cooper

The crowds are here, at our local seaside resort. The ice cream and fish-and-chip stalls are in full swing, and the town is buzzing. There are families on the beach, so for the moment dogs are denied the sand, limited to the rocks and stones. Rosie doesn't mind, so long as the café continues to serve dog ice cream.

The news from around the world is, as ever, full of death

and destruction, of hatred and despair. Yet here at the seaside, I see how little it takes to make people happy. Friends and family, an ice cream, a walk along the promenade, a souvenir from the shops, a go on the swings.

God gives us the capacity to enjoy ourselves and to create happiness for others. How can we seek God's forgiveness for the times we humans choose instead to cause grief and pain? ☺