

14 June 2015

Reflection time... PERCEPTION...

- Pics on screen – brief ask “What’s the first thing you see?....” What else do you see?
- Just as Samuel did at first (with Jesse’s sons) or the blind men and the elephant... we too judge with our eyes (or feel with our hands / hear with our ears / even taste and smell...) We have a FIRST Impression....
- **I wonder... what is... your perception of Girls’ Brigade?**

1st - The organisation?

*Didn’t they start up over 100 years ago? Don’t hear much about it?
Must be old fashioned – out of date – not relevant today! Hmmm...*

2nd - The Girls?

*Who are these girls? Where are they from? What type of families are they from?
Is there in a type? Actually, do I really care? Hmmm...*

3rd - The Leaders?

*Where are they from? Who would volunteer – and why?
What is the church looking for in a leader? What are parents expecting from a leader? What’s all the fuss about having enough leaders?
And training – do these leaders need some kind of training or experience to work with young girls? Hmmm...*

4th - The Programme?

*What programme – why do they need a programme? What does it look like?
Don’t they just play and do ‘girly’ stuff?
Is there a guideline to follow and how do the girls earn those badges?
What are they based on? Hmmm...
Perhaps they are just prizes at the end of the year!
Do the girls gain any sense of achievement and self worth from earning badges and certificates?
Isn’t that a bit ‘old school’?*

5th - The Purpose?

*What is the purpose? Do you see a purpose?
Is there a goal or an aim in having a GB ministry in a church?
Is there a purpose or a particular reason why parents bring their daughters to GB?
In fact is there a purpose or a goal or an aim for having GB all over the world –
- and in more than 50 countries? What difference does it make??? Hmmmm....*

I wonder what your perception is or has been – or will be after today?

Alongside your perception of Girls’ Brigade...

I wonder, what is ... your perception of Christianity and the Bible?

Christianity?

*Isn’t this more than 2000 years old – does that make it really old fashioned?
Out of date? Is it relevant for today?*

I say YES it is!

What about God himself?...

How old is he for goodness sake... Do we need Him these days with so much technology? Is he relevant today?

I say YES He is! He made us to connect with Him! That's already been decided!

What about Church? ... and The Holy Bible?

There are so many different Churches --- different denominations?

And the Bible... written so long ago... Are they both still relevant?

I say YES they are – although the format of 'being at Church' may change with time...

Our reason for 'church' and reading 'the bible' won't change.

And so alongside these questions we might ask...

Is Girls' Brigade relevant today?

I say YES it is - although the format and the when and where may change -

The core reason for 'Girls' Brigade' won't change.

P3

We can align the purpose, the aim and the hope of an organisation like Girls' Brigade to the purpose, the aim and the hope given to us in the Bible.

The Bible is full of stories / adventures / life experiences / challenges / blessings and examples of **God Lessons!**

Girls' Brigade also has a long history of stories / adventures / life experiences / challenges / Blessings and examples of **God Lessons!**

Today we heard of Samuel...

He couldn't understand why God didn't want Saul as King any more so he experienced grief. He didn't know what to make of it.

But despite this he was obedient... he did what God then asked of him -
– even though he was a bit uncomfortable about it.

Then through his 'human' eyes he began to check out each of Jesse's sons...
each time thinking...

"Surely, this handsome strong young man will be God's chosen one."

But no... it wasn't to be how he thought.

Samuel wasn't able to see or know for himself that David, the young shepherd boy had a heart that God was already more impressed with.

Generally we tend towards Samuel's 'humanness' – our thinking initially influenced by our perception / first impression of a person, a situation, an organisation or even God.!

We rely on what we 'see' at first hand and so often overlook the fact that God has inside knowledge – beyond what we can achieve on our own.

God has a plan and we are to have faith and trust him as well as be obedient to His leading, just as Samuel had faith, trust and was obedient to God's leading.

Who would have thought this young shepherd boy David would come to anything.

Even Samuel had no insight into God's plan – but he obeyed anyway and was suitably challenged and even afraid Saul would kill him for visiting Jesse and his sons

BUT he acted in faith not on what he could see or thought might happen.

He did not know in advance how it would pan out.

P4

Aligning this again to Girls' Brigade and specifically to the 'Samuel' journey of our GB Company... In hindsight it's easy to see where we too have been suitably challenged and needed to have faith for what lay ahead.... (myself in particular).

My story as a GB leader is not unlike that of Samuel....

Being called to serve God and consequently being challenged and even afraid at times.

Questioning too... *What is God's plan in all of this? – Does He even have one?*

Is GB

meant to remain a Children's Ministry here?

How is God going to lead this GB Company into the future?

What I do know is that just as in Jesse's family, our GB family has a mix of talents, skills and abilities. Sometimes what we see in front of us is not the same picture that God sees.

We cannot know the plans God has for these girls.

We may never be privileged to know which girls God leads to fulfil his purposes or how they will answer his call upon their lives.

But one thing is certain – we must never give up on God... Never give up serving Him in faith. Never rely on what we see or perceive to be ahead of us but instead.... believe He does have a plan... and our job is to be a 'Samuel' here and now.

Imagine if Samuel hadn't had faith to do as God had asked...

The shepherd boy would not have been anointed to begin that journey...

that journey... leading all the way down to Joseph and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Leading our GB Company has tested my faith and that of other leaders and helpers across the years.

Our faith journey is not unlike what you might read in the Bible... telling of the action and interaction of God in the lives of our people – Celebrations – Challenges – Right choices – Wrong choices – Adventures – Changed lives –

The never ending search for 'just the right King' for the time –

The right leader to guide the girls' in God's way – teach them life skills and grow relationships with them and their families.

P5

If even God was frustrated with finding leaders to do His work, how much harder is it for us to find leaders to continue his work in Girls' Brigade? *(or any other Children's Ministry)*

My experience of seeking new leaders and helpers has always been fraught with anguish, never knowing – but wanting to know... how, when or if the problem would be resolved.

Just how is God going to 'fix' this one...?

How is He going to answer the heart wrenching prayers for developing a 'new leadership team'? Does He even care?...

To be a Samuel and act in faith is no easy task – being a Christian doesn't make 'having this faith' easy to come by. What matters however, is having faith in the first place! Not how much you 'think' you have...

Allowing God to do what He needs to do to find new leaders (or whatever needs resolving)

Not relying on what you 'perceive' by yourself to be the answer.

He will reveal another 'picture' to you if you open your heart and mind to him... and wait...

--- **Jesus didn't die for nothing**....

--- **The Holy Spirit didn't come at Pentecost for nothing**....

--- **God planned this because He knew we needed a Helper.**

--- **A Helper** to live every aspect of our lives with.

--- **A Helper** to reach our ultimate goal... to wear the crown of life... and one day be with Him.

If ‘Samuel’ comes to you and says, “Yes, you’re the one – you have a heart for God – He has chosen you...

then be ready to serve the Lord, just as David did after Samuel anointed him.

Step out in faith and trust you will make a difference in fulfilling God’s plan...

... whether it be in Children’s Ministry / Elderly Care / Helping with morning teas / Helping at school or keeping in touch with someone who would otherwise be lonely.

It will be testing at times. It will bring pleasantly surprising outcomes –

... all of which are easier to understand in hindsight....

Hindsight... What a wonderful thing!

P6

Yes... we have the advantage now of reading the Bible long after the events and stories took place..

We can now see how God’s plan to use Samuel worked out in the end...

BUT how do we move forward from today, in our own lives, without knowing the end of our story?

How does any parent wait and ‘see’ how their beautiful baby will be when grown up?

It is by faith...

We have before us our GB girls... and other children in our families.

Parents ‘see’ their children as they are today...

How do they picture them as teenagers? - As young independent adults?

Even parents themselves in the future?

How can and how do parents get through the years waiting for each phase to arrive and pass?

It is by faith...

Faith in themselves as parents.

Faith in the schooling system.

Faith in the community in which they live and all factors that might influence their precious child.

Faith that their child will make choices which lead them to a good place.

Ultimately.... Faith in God.

Our Corinthians reading has already given us this answer...

“But we live by Faith not by what we See.”

I wish to share a quote from a devotional book called ‘Morning Moments with God’...

P7

“Faith is the anticipation of things unseen.

Living with this attitude is a necessary part of the Christian life because

‘without faith it is impossible to please God.’

God wants us to trust Him and that trust is best demonstrated when we obey

His marching orders implicitly. (Just as Samuel did)

Consider yourself blessed when God asks you to do something that requires faith.

He’s giving you an opportunity to grow spiritually and to see Him do amazing things on your behalf.

Sure, your knuckles may turn white in the process, but you’ll honour and please God with your obedience.

Take action...

Memorize... 2 Corinthians 5:7 “We live by faith, not by sight”

Let Him provide your Helper

Amen

I’ve asked 2 wonderful young women to share their GB journey with you today.

Jessica and Helen