Bournville, Stirchley, Cotteridge & Kings Norton

Points

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The Role Model

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‘Choose wisely, you must…’

There are a huge range of role models to choose from – some constructive – some destructive. It is so important to realise the difference and choose wisely.

As you can tell, I am a fan of Yoda, and sometimes find myself falling into ‘Yoda Speak’. Yoda is of course the Jedi Master and one of the main protagonists of the Star Wars Films. I nominate him as a role model. He has a certain morality and has a wise solution for most problems. I find myself visualising the image of Yoda rather than his creator – George Lucas.

As I’ve suggested, a role model may not be a real person. My next role model is neither real or fictitious. It is an A4 sized text entitled: Desiderata, by Max Ehrmann c1927, and deals with how to lead a peaceful, good life. It begins:

> *Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons…*

When I was learning to write, I had an excellent tutor. His words were: ‘Tell a simple story, never use a fancy word when you can use a simple one, and leave unnecessary stuff out.’ Anyway, Desiderata is a perfect example of those principles, and I commend it to anyone – those with and those without religion.

For those of you familiar with my two examples you will note that neither include reference to Jesus, or indeed any common world religions, and yet, quite clearly, they endeavour to teach the difference between good and evil. So, how do they do that? I would suggest it is by subtle reference to a ‘higher order’, specifically:

Yoda says: ‘To be a Jedi is to face the truth, and choose - give off light, or darkness - be a candle, or be the night.’ In a similar biblical passage Jesus Christ says: ‘I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of

life' (John 8:12). There are other similar biblical passages that relate to light and darkness. Additionally, there are numerous Yoda quotes that relate to 'The Force'. For example: 'A Jedi's strength flows from the Force, and: 'May the force be with you.' I presume by The Force, Yoda is referring to His God.

Desiderata states: Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. A similar biblical passage is: When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. When I became a man, I put away childish things' (Corinthians 13:11). Additionally, Desiderata refers to God saying: Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be.

So, Choose wisely, you must… And may the Force and Your God be with you. Mowgli

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How many role models do you need?

'Role models' are more than just people you admire**;** they are people you believe you could become. They are more than distant historical figures; they are people you could grow up to be. They are more than just influences on you; they are the person you could evolve into.

But no-one can be, or wants to be, identical to someone else. So we take parts of other people that we want to be – their behaviour, their beliefs, their confidence, their accent or language, their appearance or clothes and emulate that characteristic. A role model does not mean that you copy the model. A role model is something you base yourself on, but you customise to your own beliefs, your own way of life, your own history and work out how you get from here to there.

I guess your earliest role models are your parents. However, early experience of role models is then overlaid by the social conditioning of our society. As a child (female), I can remember playing the father of a family driving off to work, (in my go-cart, which belonged to my brother). This was despite the fact that my father, being a minister of religion, did not actually go 'off to work' and did not even have a car at that time.

Then there is school and the oft-cited influences of teachers. Note these are not actually role models themselves. It would be wonderful if they were – just think what a teaching profession we might have if every child who had been influenced by an inspirational teacher, grew up to become such a teacher themselves. But we take something from that teacher and absorb it into ourselves.

Influencers can also influence you to be the opposite. Despite always wanting to be a teacher, the last thing I wanted to be was like the perceived post-war 'spinsters' who seemed to inhabit most of my secondary classrooms. I wanted to be a teacher who challenged my pupils, who got them out from behind desks and copying from the board.

And that's where books (or TV or films) come in as providing our role models. I wanted (as did every girl who has ever read it) to be Jo of Little Women. I have a collection of 1930's school girl novels and from them I took the daringness of these heroines who rescued children from runaway trains or poisoned

pictures or even war time bombing.

Following that, my university role models were student politicians, the activists of the 70s. I had no aspiration to be an academic at that time – possibly because there was only one female member of staff in the whole of the English Department at the University of Birmingham!

So for us to develop into the widest possible human beings, all children have to have the widest possible experience and come into contact with the widest possible range of people. If you only ever go to a private prep school, are educated at a 'public school', go to Oxbridge, (Of the 31 ministers attending Rishi Sunak's new cabinet in October 2022, nearly half (45%) went to Oxbridge.), then you are unlikely to see any other kinds of people as role models.

The same is true of the arts or sport or science or finance or the public sector and you are at the other end of the privileged classes. If the only people you see in these fields are people who don't look like you, don't speak like you, don't go to a school like yours, don't live in a house like yours, then it is much more difficult to find any aspirational role models. If our churches are mostly populated by old white people, then it is difficult for young black people to see themselves as having any role in this arena.

But we can all be role models for somebody in something. We need role models rather than critics. Role models don't have to be high profile revolutionaries. They can be any of us.

Helen Gale

The Echoes of St. Francis of Assisi

Very little has been changed by eight hundred years
For the small hillside town of Assisi
Nothing at all has been changed by eight hundred years
In the message Saint Francis gave the world

It was there that his first followers worked with him,
living in rough shelters they built nearby,
By the chapel, the Portiuncula so dear
To his heart, and to the rest of his life.

After a few more years the Order had grown great,
In its numbers, and five thousand brothers
From Italy, France, and Spain, gathered together
In a space by the Portiuncula.

Lying in the Basilica of Saint Francis
Is the tomb of the well loved holy man.
Four followers are buried near – they are Leo,
Rufino, Angelo and Masseo.

Perhaps the humblest of men, if he were alive,
Would be shocked at the sheer size and grandeur
Of the great Basilica, where his pilgrims flock,
Graced by the great frescoes, some by Giotto

Lying down the valley, below Assisi,
Is yet another great Basilica,
Saint Mary of the Angels, and, inside its walls,
still stands the tiny Portiuncula.

In this same modest chapel Francis asked to die,
Ending his ministry where he started
to send his message of love – and serving the poor -
To the whole world, and to the end of time

Rev Ros Murphy

Looking up for Inspiration….

Do we place role models on pedestals? People who we think have achieved great things.

The reality is that they have probably failed many times, but each time they got it wrong they dusted themselves down and tried again.

At school I recall reading about Robert Bruce who had lost many battles in his fight to be King and free his country, Scotland. In a desolate attempt to survive he resorted to seeking shelter in a cave. Inside the cave, while he began despondently to take stock of his life, he noticed a spider trying to weave a web from one end of the cave to another. Again and again it failed. Even after six failed attempts, it did not lose heart but tried yet again to complete the web. Finally, on the seventh attempt, the spider succeeded in weaving the web.

This spider taught the king a valuable lesson, and filled with new hope and courage, King Robert resolved not to give up and once again gathered his army and urged his people to add more men and fight bravely against the enemy. This time he was successful in freeing and reclaiming his country.

Simon Bar-Jona was a fisherman who had a fishing boat with his brother Andrew and two colleagues, Jacob and John; together they fished the Sea of Galilee. Although it is called a sea it is in fact a large freshwater lake in which there were at least three types of fish, Musht, Pike and Catfish. The Jews didn't eat catfish, considering it unclean, but they sold it to the Greek communities instead.

Simon lived with his extended family, including his mother in law, in a house near the sea and after Andrew introduced Simon to Jesus we learn a lot about his journey. Jesus changed Simon's Hebrew name to Cephas, or the Greek Petros which we know as Peter. It means a rock and we liken it to a foundation stone. One of the first things Jesus did when he established his ministry was to appoint a successor. Peter was very loyal and faithful but being human his frailties let him down in times of great stress. His greatest trial and shame was denying Jesus three times. However, unlike Judas, Peter accepted that he got things wrong, asked forgiveness and kept going.

Saul was another biblical character who was also known by another name, Paul. But in this instance there was no great name change instigated by Jesus. Paul actually means small. But he made up for his lack of stature with his strong and persuasive personality. He had been brought up as a wealthy Pharisee and persecuted Christians until his conversion at Damascus. Following this he put his oratorial skills to great use teaching about Christianity.

Peter and Paul are probably considered our two greatest evangelists and missionaries. Both travelled through Syria and up into the north of Turkey as well as Cyprus, Greece and Italy. Some people believe Paul travelled to Spain and Britain. Everywhere Peter and Paul travelled they spread the Word and were the Christian influencers of their day.

So if you are looking for a role model then you could consider either of these two leaders who were less than perfect but kept on going with their Faith. Or you could consider who they used as their role model.

John Slevin

Jesus the Christ

Jesus the Christ,
Unconquerable even by death!
Bursting out from the depths of the tomb.
A new power, let loose in the world.
Now unrestrictedly.

Accumulating evidence of a risen spirit body.
Demonstrating victory.
A meeting in a garden.
Bread in a house
Fish on the shore.
A promise of more to come.

No more parting, but now an unseen presence.
in the depths of the heart.
God's new creation,
fulfilment of centuries of gradual revelation,
the way to at-one-ment for the people of God.
A glimpse of eternity here in the world.
Look and see your passers-by,
Here is another way, a way of love.
Empowered by the Spirit,
transforming inner desires,
enabling victory over evil.
Here is the power to energise the Creation,
God's strength in apparent weakness,
not foolishness, by true wisdom.

Rev Ros Murphy

We thought we would ask Chat GPT ,which is a virtual artificial intelligence (AI), what it understood by the term role Model.
This is its reply.

A role model is someone who serves as a positive example for others, often admired and emulated for their behaviour, achievements, or qualities. Role models can be individuals who have achieved success in a particular field, demonstrated exceptional character traits, or positively impacted the lives of others. They inspire and influence others through their actions, choices, and values. Role models can be found in various spheres of life, including:

Professional Role Models: These are individuals who have excelled in their careers and serve as inspirations for others pursuing similar paths. They may be successful entrepreneurs, leaders, scientists, artists, or athletes.

Personal Role Models: Personal role models are people we know closely, such as family members, friends, or mentors, who have a positive impact on our lives. They may provide guidance, support, and encouragement.

Celebrity Role Models: Some individuals in the public eye, such as actors, musicians, or public figures, may become role models due to their achievements and the positive influence they have on their fans.

Community Role Models: These are people who make a significant difference in their communities through volunteering, activism, or philanthropy, inspiring others to get involved and contribute positively.

Role models can help shape values, aspirations, and behaviour in individuals, particularly in young people. It's essential for role models to embody qualities like integrity, empathy, resilience, and a strong work ethic, as these traits can have a profound impact on those who look up to them.

However, it's crucial to note that no one is perfect, and even role models may have their flaws. The key is to recognize and appreciate their positive attributes while understanding that everyone is human and can make mistakes. The goal of a role model is to motivate and encourage others to strive for their best selves and to make a positive difference in the world.

David - Hero or Villain?

The Philistines are at war with King Saul of Israel but the two sides had reached an impasse. Against all the odds, a shepherd boy stumbles into the war zone and by his faith changes the course of history.

From 1200 to 1000 BC the Philistines were Israel's most hated enemies. Their skills at forging weapons and building chariots, enabled them to dominate the Mediterranean coastal plains. Their sticking point, however, was that chariots were ineffective in the mountainous regions of central Israel.

On this occasion the Philistine army was threatening war against Israel. David, the youngest son of Jesse, had been sent to the battle lines by his father to bring back news of his brothers. David had no experience of war; he was only a boy

who tended his father's sheep and when he arrived he found a stand-off with the two armies facing each other on opposite sides of a steep valley.

For 40 days neither army had been prepared to make the first move, fearing that placing themselves in a vulnerable position would risk great loss. Morning and evening on each of these days, Goliath, a giant of a man, had emerged and mockingly defied the Israelites to send a single man to fight him. When David heard Goliath's taunting challenge and saw how the men of Israel were afraid, he was deeply offended, not for himself but on behalf of his God. He was zealous to defend the Lord's name - "How could anyone defy the armies of the living God?"

Rejecting the offer of Saul's fine armour and helmet, David dressed only in his tunic and faced Goliath with the humble weapons of a shepherd. The result, triumphing over the Philistines and saving Israel's army, is biblical history. Carnage ensued, but this was just one of many battles in the Old Testament and there was always going to be a victorious side and a loser, so does this make David a villain?

Or was David a hero? Certainly he had great courage and was prepared to fight for what he considered was right in spite of others' scepticism (how often do we do this?) His indignation on God's behalf gave him the bravery to face up to a bully (when was the last time we stood up for God?) David's deep faith in God gave him trust, and his strong belief gave him the confidence to put himself in God's hands in order to defend those around him. For me these are characteristics worth trying to emulate; and these are what make him a role model.

Jesus is the model for Christian life by **teaching the significance of love and forgiveness within parables such as The Prodigal Son** (Luke 15: 11-32). He preaches so that his believers can display unconditional love and forgiveness through his inspiring commandment to "love one another".

(John 13: 34).

Foodbank

Last month we received in 2259k and gave out 2338k
feeding 250 clients on 130 vouchers

Urgently needed

Sweet biscuits (not multi-packs, as they often have no ingredients listed), pasta sauce, tinned spaghetti, baked beans, tinned soup, jam/ honey, chocolate bars, tinned/carton ready-made custard, small jars of instant coffee (not decaffeinated), liquid/bar soap, gender neutral shower gel and shampoo

Low in stock
UHT semi-skimmed milk, rice (500g) tinned meat (ham, corned beef, pork sandwich, pulled pork, chicken), long-life fruit juice (not needing refrigeration), cereal (not greater than 500g), UHT whole milk, tinned rice pudding, tinned tomatoes, tinned vegetables (carrots, peas, sweetcorn), tinned fish (tuna, mackerel, sardines, salmon), squash, porridge (not greater than 500g), dog food, cat food, tinned/packet vegetarian meals, sugar (500g), sanitary pads, toilet rolls, washing up liquid, laundry liquid/ powder (not family sized), nappies size 6

Well stocked
Pasta shapes, dry spaghetti, tinned potatoes, instant hot chocolate (not cocoa powder), tinned fruit in juice (not prunes, rhubarb or grapefruit), noodles, instant potato, nappies sizes 1-3, baby food and baby care items, gender neutral roll-on deodorants, razors, baby wipes, toothpaste, toothbrushes (single or duo pack)

Not needed at all
Tea bags (40's or 80's), crisps, decaffeinated drinks or fruit infusions, bottled water, large bottles of lemonade or coke, any food or toiletries containing alcohol, cooking ingredient or sauces, instant potato, tinned macaroni cheese, fresh products (including vegetables, fruit, meat, eggs and bread), non-dairy items, gluten-free items, coffee beans, loose tea, large boxes of teabags (120's or more), very large bags or boxes of porridge and cereal, cocoa powder, medicines, mouth wash, tampons, make up hair accessories, perfume or aftershave, Christmas or Easter items

Clients needing food are referred to the foodbank by e voucher through a referral agent or Citizens Advice 0808 208 2138] or call Birmingham City Council on 0121 216 3030

HELPING LOCAL PEOPLE IN CRISIS

You are invited …

Places of Welcome

Pavilion has a session every Friday morning in the Rowheath Terrace Room.

Bournville Parish Church, St Francis meets every Thursday morning 10.30 am – 12 noon in Church.

Warm Spaces - where people can gather for free in a warm, safe, welcoming place and enjoy a hot drink and some company.

Cotteridge Church
Mon-Friday 9.30 am – 1.30 pm

Click on the different links below to find out what's happening in your church

(Crl + click on link)

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For further details of worship and/or activities at any of the churches please contact the people below:

- St. Andrew's Methodist Church
  Revd. Farai Mapamula - 427 1747
- Society of Friends, Bournville
  Claire Bowman - 07753 635438
  Room Hire, 471 2155
  annegiles57@gmail.com
- St. Francis Church, Bournville
  Rev Canon Richard Wharton - 472 7215
- Rowheath Pavilion Church
  Inter regnum
  Office - 458 1711.
- Society of Friends, Cotteridge
  Chris Martin - 475 2088
- The Cotteridge Church
  Revd. Mike Claridge - 433 5176
  Revd. Roger Collins - 459 4009
  or Church Office - 433 5518
- Ascension Stirchley
  Revd. Catherine Grylls - 443 1371
- Catholic Church of Ss Joseph and Helen
- Catholic Church of St Paul's
  Father David Barry - 458 1236

"Points" is published by Churches Together in Birmingham 30 for the exchange of ideas and news. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the churches as a group or individually.

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Next Issue's Focus will be

What is Poverty?

If you wish to submit an article please send to the Editor by: 19 September