

Activity - My Faith, My Gender: A Conversation

Kathy Galloway

Song

God beyond all names, never fully known

Mystery of mysteries, calling us Your own

(Words and music by John L Bell, 'We Walk His Way: Shorter songs for worship', (Wild Goose Publications, 2008), ISBN 978-1-9050-55-4.)

Structured Conversation *(people in small groups) 30 minutes*

1. Read 'I Will Praise God my Beloved' (text below).
2. Pick one word that you remember from this Psalm. Share it with your group.
3. What feelings can you identify on hearing this read? Are there images it brings to mind? What circumstances can you imagine reading this in, either individually or collectively?
4. Do you think that this Psalm could be disturbing to anyone, and why? If you are a woman, how do you think a man might hear it? If you are a man, how do you think a woman might hear it?
5. In what ways do you think your faith is gendered, personally and in your faith community? Is there anything you would change about it if you could?



I WILL PRAISE GOD, MY BELOVED

I will praise God, my Beloved,
for she is altogether lovely.
Her presence satisfies my soul:
she fills my senses to overflowing
so that I cannot speak.
Her touch brings me to life;
the warmth of her hands makes me wholly alive.
Her embrace nourishes me, body and spirit;
every part of my being responds to her touch.
The beauty of her face is more than I can bear;
in her gaze I drown.
When she looks upon me
I can withhold nothing;
when she asks for my love
all my defences crumble;
my pride and my control are utterly dissolved.
O God, I fear your terrible mercy;
I am afraid to surrender my self.
If I let go into the whirlpool of your love,
shall I survive the embrace?
If I fall into the strong currents of your desire,
shall I escape drowning?
But how shall I refuse my Beloved,
and how can I withdraw from the one my heart yearns for?
On the edge of your abyss I look down and I tremble;
but I will not stand gazing for ever.
Even in chaos you will bear me up;
if the waters go over my head,
you will still be holding me up.
For the chaos is yours also,
and in the swirling of mighty waters
is your presence known.
If I trust her, surely her power will not fail me;
nor will she let me be utterly destroyed.
Though I lose all knowledge and all security,
yet will my God never forsake me;
but she will recreate me, in her steadfast love,
so that I need not be afraid.
Then will I praise my Beloved among the people,
among those who seek to know God.

– C. Janet Morley, *“All Desires Known”*, (SPCK, 1992), ISBN 0-281-04591-7.

– Kathy is an ordained Church of Scotland minister and was, in 2002 the first woman to be elected leader of the Iona Community. Kathy is currently based in Glasgow where she leads the team and represents Christian Aid at a national level.