

Passing the Test

Here's a question for you, smart people:

“When did the *Habeus Corpus Act* become law?

1679 1687 1685 1683”

Unless you have done a Law degree, work in the legal professional or are a particularly nerdy pub quizzer, I would be amazed – and truly impressed – if you know the answer.

This question, I am reliably informed, is one of the possible options in the ‘Life in the UK test’. (It is one of the practice questions ‘in the public domain’. You can have a go online if you want to try it.) To be fair I believe that there are also some straightforward questions which might be of more relevance to functioning well in these isles. Knowing how to order fish and chips with or without salt and vinegar I suspect could be a useful one – but I’m not sure if this is included.

By the way, if you want to know the answer to ‘Habeus Corpus’, it can be found below *

Someone, or some group, somewhere has the task of devising a range of questions to decide whether an applicant has sufficient knowledge of British history, lifestyle and culture to warrant a pass on this test. For anyone who has faced it, they will know it can be quite stressful. For those of us who have lived here all our lives, we may wonder whether indeed we would pass and be deemed to be a suitable resident. Thankfully we don’t have to. As a family we were delighted when our daughter-in-law was recently successful. She did say that the random conversations around our dinner table during ‘covid lockdown’ proved helpful!

Learning things and developing understanding is great. Whether we are young or old, or somewhere in between, it is always satisfying to learn something new.

This all makes me think of a different ‘kingdom’ and what we might learn here. The kingdom of God, which Jesus declared is with us, now. The learning we come to in God’s kingdom is God-given and experiential, an inward, growing- knowing, not necessarily information in our heads. We learn by living and walking with each other in the way Jesus has shown us. There is no entrance examination or requirement that we must demonstrate what we know. That’s a relief!

There may come a time of course when we remember, understand and retain nothing. This will not separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38,39) ; it doesn’t depend on understanding.

Whilst we believe this, it also saddens me that in some churches there can be a subtle – or not so subtle – pressure to conform, to ‘pass the test’. Churches do have statements of belief and doctrine to declare what they stand for. I wonder sometimes if these are used to mould people’s thought patterns? I have had a number of conversations with people who struggle to find their genuine voice and Christian beliefs in a church where they are not sure

this is acceptable. I also wonder how many people just keep their heads down and say nothing because they feel they don't know enough and might look 'stupid' if they speak.

Thoughts to ponder.

I hope we can maintain, nurture and encourage a living, open space in our churches where voices and questions and curiosity can be heard without immediately being 'put straight'; place where we can genuinely explore on our journey together.

When all is said and done, none of us will 'pass the test' of knowledge and understanding.

God's grace is the open invitation into this kingdom.

LMT

*The **Habeas Corpus Act 1679** is an act of the Parliament of England passed during the reign of Charles II.^[1] It was passed by what became known as the Habeas Corpus Parliament to define and strengthen the ancient prerogative writ of *habeas corpus*, which required a court to examine the lawfulness of a prisoner's detention and thus prevent unlawful or arbitrary imprisonment.

(Wikipedia)