

The pick of the crop

Jeni Parsons *reflects on* Acts 8:26-end

Please let me be picked for the team this time." That was my childhood prayer at school during games. It wasn't that I liked games but the shame of once again being the last one chosen was painful to that small foreign-sounding seven-year-old. Being included was really important. I'd travelled twelve thousand miles and had a broad Australian accent and it was long before *Neighbours* was popular on the telly. That childhood experience is one that lots of people can identify with because they somehow didn't fit as a child.

The Ethiopian eunuch was different from those around him. As an important person (though

still a servant) he had a chariot all of his own; he could read; he is likely to have had a different skin colour from Philip and he was unable to have children of his own. Here is a mixture of prestige and loss. He is reading from the book of Isaiah and there he reads of a servant of God who, rather than receiving good treatment, had to bear a weight of misery which seemed to include being destroyed, maybe without descendants to mourn him. The Eunuch can identify with this. Philip's response is to show him within this passage how God has granted adoption to all through being baptised into God's family so that no one is left unchosen, or un-choosable. 🍏

God of the Ethiopian eunuch, and all who are different for whatever reason, hear our longing to be chosen by you as your own loved one. In our baptism may we know the joy of adoption by you. Amen.

Fruits of the Spirit

– a meditation on Galatians 5:22-23

Love is like an apple

by Caroline Hodgson

In his letter to the Galatians (5:22-23) St Paul lists nine qualities which are known as the Fruits of the Spirit.

To love one another is Jesus' most fundamental command – a staple, nourishing rule to live by. And it's true that a dose of love every day – like an apple – keeps us in good spiritual, emotional and physical health. Just as an apple tree can grow in an inhospitable

environment, love can flourish in the hardest of hearts. The love in a marriage can be likened to apple blossom – a beautiful flower that ripens into something satisfying and fulfilling. Family love lies at our very core – as in Proverbs 7:2, when the father tells his son to "keep my teachings as the apple of your eye". If we read the story of creation in Genesis we find that the apple, like love, has a forbidden side. By contrast, Christian love is pure and unconditional, and extends to all people. 🍏



World Laughter Day

Today is World Laughter Day.

Lisa Tulfer joins in the merriment.

In fourth-century Egypt a monk called Evagrius Ponticus developed the idea of Christian vices (which would later evolve into the Seven Deadly Sins) and virtues. One of the vices was sadness, the failure to respond joyfully to God's love, and the corresponding virtue was *hilaritas*, or Christian joy.

Humans express joy through smiling and laughter, so you

may want to take part in World Laughter Day today. Started in Mumbai in 1998 by Dr Madan Kataria, the annual event raises awareness about laughter and its benefits – it is believed to increase people's well-being, including through the release of endorphins. The logo of Dr Kataria's international movement has the tagline "World Peace through Laughter", and the day seeks to unite humanity through the shared language of laughter. In Copenhagen in 2000, almost ten thousand people gathered for a "Happydemic". In 2020, events used Zoom and Skype to connect people laughing around the world.

Laughter is contagious. Can you do something today to spread a bit of laughter? 🍏

“

Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.”

Psalms 126:2