

The question is whether he is willing to accept that he is vulnerable; whether he can acknowledge that he can't find all the answers on his own; whether he can enter into a time of searching, depending on others to help rebuild his life in this kingdom, where everything is turned around and made new.

What makes this meeting unique is that he departs from the gaze of Jesus sad. There are many reactions towards Jesus, but people don't usually leave dejected. The man cannot find it within him to openly admit that he is weak. He returns to his possessions and status, the false image that now imprisons him, the baggage that holds him back.

## Application

We don't know how his story ends, but perhaps we should not be worried about one whom Christ loved so much. We do know that the Word of God, who is Jesus, helped the enquirer to meet his real self just as he can help us to see ourselves in the clear light of day. The true knowledge, sought after by the author of the book of Wisdom, comes in the encounter with the Word of God. This is not always a comfortable experience. Getting close to Jesus means getting close to others, examining our own motives. This can change us. As we gather around God's table together, let's drop our pretences and bring our true selves to God.

It is difficult for us to give up what holds us back, but that is what we are called to do in this new kingdom. We are called from fear and isolation, into community; from conformity and simple observance into a new life together. Just like Mark's young, persecuted Church, the young student from the East found true community and strength even in the face of hostility. Let's remember that it is not the splendour of our buildings, nor the accuracy of our doctrines, that makes us powerful: it's our reliance on God's word and on each other, helping to build the kingdom out of our weakness and God's strength. For nothing is impossible to God.