

Empathy



Rock Formations, Kakadu National Park

Photography: Gwenneth Leane

Indonesian people first visited Australian shores and made contact with Aboriginal people, trading in pearls, pearl shell, turtle shell, and trepang. Glass and metal fragments of that era found at archaeological digs have been found.

Kakadu National Park is home to spectacular rock formations. No matter the culture, nature speaks to the heart. God intended it to be that way so that we could be led to him, the Creator.

In seeing the beauty of nature we see the beauty of God and wish to know him better. We can touch him and marvel at his mind in creation. We can co-experience nature with God and we can relate to him through creation.

“Learning is a result of listening, which in turn leads to even better listening and attentiveness to the other person. In other words, to learn from the child, we must have **EMPATHY**, and **EMPATHY** grows as we learn.” - **Alice Miller**, Swiss psychologist.

There is a difference between empathy and sympathy. Knowing the difference will affect our relationships.

Empathy stays and supports in time of trouble.

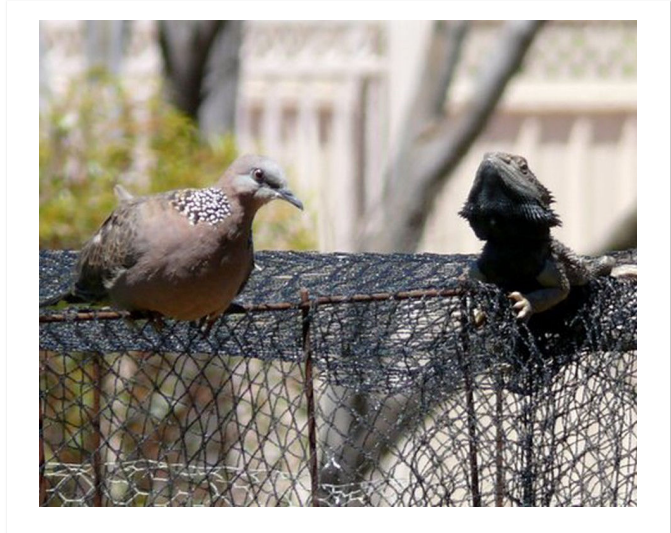
Empathy is the ability to co-experience and relate to the thoughts, emotions, or experience of another without them being communicated directly by the individual.

Jesus empathised when he said, ‘I am with you always even to the end of the world.’

Sympathy is the ability to understand and to support the emotional situation or experience of another being with compassion and sensitivity.

In our garden live two crested pigeons. For the sake of the story we'll call them Adam and Eve.

When springtime brought the garden alive, Adam noticed Eve. In his eyes she was beautiful. He began to court her with dancing and displays of his plumage. She accepted his advances and they became inseparable after several weeks. Where Adam was feeding, Eve was feeding or vice versa. While grooming themselves they groomed each other as well. They were so in love. Their empathy with each other was instinctive.



Then Eve wanted a family and then the empathy vanished. Adam was not family minded and he vanished. Eve was left on her own to construct a nest on a few twigs put together in a haphazard manner. She was no architect and it was a wonder that the eggs never fell through the gaps.

But she was devoted to the task of passing on her genes and her kind and sat on the nest through baking heat and raging storm, by herself. Three weeks later there was a fledgling. It grew with great speed as she fed it from her crop and without any teaching from Eve it left the nest to make its way in the world. There was no empathy for her child. Eve's job was done.

Adam and Eve can now be seen together sitting on a favourite brick, empathising with each other. The interruption of parenthood is over until spring returns.

