

Collision is Possible
- *Crashing and Clashing With New Realities*

Sometimes on the road of life, not-so-pleasant realities come traveling alongside you and you never see them. Blind spots slide along next to you on your journey. Because of them, there is no way for you to anticipate all you might encounter. Without your knowledge or intent, you may find yourself in a collision of expectations or ideas. As part of your preparation, you can acknowledge the possibility that you may be disillusioned at points; you can accept that you do not control the agenda or the attitudes of those you will meet.

Getting Sideswiped

You set out on your trip with lots of curiosity and plenty of good intentions. You are eager to learn, open to what your hosts will show you. You have taken hold of the idea of “accompaniment” and are ready to walk with your hosts. You are tuned in to cultural norms and are doing your best not to offend anyone. Yet, as careful and considerate as you try to be, you find yourself a target, taking hits from some of the people you meet.

To some of them, you represent the society from which you come. You embody both historical and current political policies. You bring quilts for refugees, but some in the camp want you to explain the immigration laws that prevent them from finding a safe home. You bring medicine for the hospital, but find yourself being held accountable for the colonialism that spawned the civil war that, in turn, has prevented the establishment of a stable, indigenous health care system. You thought you were providing a simple act of loving service; instead, you find yourself placed in the middle of a complex reality. You are misunderstood and it hurts.

When you are challenged in this way, new questions may arise. You may wonder why you never learned certain parts of history. You may question your perception of your government or your church. Your understanding of the world is getting shaken up.

As you add these new pieces to your world view, the view in your side mirror changes. You are not sure how to feel about it. You may feel hopelessness since your small act of kindness can't solve the bigger issues. You may feel guilt as you realize that much of your good life has come at the expense of others.

Road Rage

On the other hand, you may find yourself getting angry or offended by what you encounter. The Christian charity in your heart is getting overshadowed. You want to think the best of the people, but you are really bothered by the way they live. You don't understand how they can just accept their children dying from diseases that could be prevented if they would just make hygiene a priority. Your blood may start to boil as a sermon at worship interprets the gospel within the context of political militancy. The Christ they are praising does not sound like the Christ you know. You find yourself unable to accept this interpretation. Your friendly disposition is becoming antagonistic

You may also encounter people who try to take advantage of you. You represent something they resent. You may have something that they want. If you have romanticized the people as you prepared to travel, soon enough you will wake to the reality that humanity is humanity everywhere. There are saints and shysters in every community. You will have to find a way not to discount your entire experience because of a few distasteful encounters.

Collision Recovery

There is no guarantee that you will come away from your travels unscathed. You should expect to get at least a few scratches in your veneer. You are traveling a new road with different traffic patterns, after all. There is also the possibility that this trip will have a major impact on your life.

To follow Christ is to find yourself on a path that challenges the ways of the world. As you get shaken up by what you encounter on the journey, consider that you are in good company. The disciples were often surprised by what Jesus did or what he expected of them. The Gospel writer of Mark portrays them as baffled by much of what Christ said and did. They just don't get this new way of thinking, this new way of behaving.

You are traveling with people of God, to meet other people of God. Trust the love of God that holds all of you

together. Call on that love to get you through the different understandings you may have. Peter was rebuked by Jesus for something he said just minutes after he made an incredible declaration of faith (Mark 8). You can be rebuked and held in love by the same people.

Jesus offered radical new interpretations of age-old scripture. The Pharisees he challenged believed with all their heart they "had it right." They were invited to live the faith in a new way. This may be what you are called to do. You don't have to accept without question. Let your questions be formed in the love of Christ.

You also do not have to resolve all the questions immediately. This trip is only one part of your life journey. Some collision marks from the trip will need attention so they do not impair your functioning at home. But some marks you may want to leave as they are, allowing the encounter to reshape you just a bit.

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