

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE SPIRIT JOURNEY MODEL

– WHY IT WORKS SO WELL

by Sue Kaldor

This ministry is based on a multi-dimensional model which is fundamental to each journey experience.

It is a journey:

There is a start, middle and ending to the travelling which adds a sense of movement through the process of reflection. This sense seems to connect well with aboriginal nomadic life and the many desert journey stories from the Bible. It becomes a great metaphor for reflecting on the journey of our lives.

It is a short-term sharing community:

- New relationships are formed in the process – we share the journey together.
- A bonding process is actively pursued which helps people feel safe, welcome and part of a team. We all take on an adventure together.
- Leaving behind roles and status of our everyday life which enables us to taste the Kingdom of God community.
- Leadership and participants share responsibilities giving an experience of community rather than customer / tourist / client relationship. The leadership style is that of servant leadership.

The desert is the spiritual director.

Thus the journey itself is very informal. Participants can bring reading or devotional materials and some are available for those who are interested. After dinner informal reflection and conversation is an important part of the daily routine.

Most profound is the experience of the desert itself. Just as in the desert the light can feel clear and crisp, time atop a sand dune can provide participants with ‘clear light’ on their own lives, and the hugeness of the space we explore seems to open up space within ourselves.

The wilderness facilitates the stripping away of other distractions, props, personas and invites an honest review of one’s self, one’s goals, and one’s way of being in the world.

The unique environment and camping experience provides opportunities for discovery of new aspects of one’s self.

On a journey everyone participates in work roles, decisions, and sharing. This enables a greater sense of ownership of the process and allows a great deal of opportunity for individuals to learn new skills and discover new previously unknown capacities they have.

We discover new aspects of ourselves in the process of:

- Driving a 4WD
- Camping without any facilities
- Sleeping under the stars
- Cooking on a campfire
- Spending time completely alone
- Engaging more fully with the natural world around us
- Praying and sharing
- Storytelling
- Stepping outside comfort zones
- Rediscovering 'play'
- Making our own entertainment

People are immersed in the created universe.

The fact that we use minimalist camping techniques and encourage people to make every kind of contact with the land, the trees, the wildlife, the camp fire, the stars etc. results in a very heightened experience of God's creation which invites response to the Creator God and respect for the earth.

Solitude allows a heightened awareness of spirit.

People coming on the journeys are stripped of their usual distractions, responsibilities, relationships, context and placed in an environment which confronts them with creation, with the stories and the spiritual life of a people who previously travelled through this land and with regular discussion around the camp fire on spiritual things. These elements of a journey seem to contribute to people having a heightened awareness of their own spirit, experiencing life in a richer, deeper way as their senses are refreshed. This process leads to participants noticing more, questioning, thinking more clearly about their lives, wrestling with issues, and to creative expression, prayer and praise. For some the impact on their spirit is only obvious when they return home.

The simple rhythm for each day creates a practice of simplicity.

Our daily routine is rising with the sun, having a campfire breakfast, doing simple chores, having a brief prayer in a circle before we break camp, then journeying for the day until we camp, celebrate a meal together, share stories again, and then lie down on the earth under the skies. This very simplified rhythm of our existence becomes quite addictive after a week, and often has a powerful impact on people, and sometimes participants feel energised to initiate or change their spiritual disciplines back home.

The major "ways of being" are listening ways rather than acting ways.

On the journeys we spend much time looking, listening, observing, reflecting, wondering, exploring and fitting in with our environment. This is in sharp contrast with most of our lives where our 'way of being' is full of doing, planning, worrying about and manipulating or destroying our environments.