

God Is Stranger by Krish Kandiah

Chapter 1 (5th May)

Adam and the Stranger: The God who turns up only to drive us away.

Summary:

Kandiah begins with the story of a woman whose husband, whom she trusted implicitly, tried to telephone-scam her out of their money to fund his other family. Sometimes in friendships people act like total strangers. Kandiah says God is our friend, but he is also a stranger. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were God's friends, yet they betrayed him and discovered the impact of sin. So they, and we, were displaced from the harmony of Eden; displaced within our relationships as they break down; displaced inside ourselves as we struggle with self-image and our mental health; and displaced from our relationship with God as we instinctively hide from him. God becomes a stranger as we all deal with the world's brokenness.

Notes:

- Kandiah makes a really helpful point on p. 18. "God is simply a different order of being to us." This just means God's existence is completely different to ours. He is uncreated and always exists; we are created and need to receive our existence. He needs nothing; we need a planet, an atmosphere, food etc.. Hence why we face "cross-cultural' communication issues with God." If his way of existing is so different, his way of acting is sometimes bound to be bigger and stranger than our expectations.
- Adam and Eve's story in Genesis helps to shine a light on our behaviour, the nature of the world and the dynamics of our relationship with God. So it's far more than what's called a 'theodicy' (an explanation for why there is suffering in the world).

Questions:

1. "... we have to wrestle with the fact that Scripture depicts God here as one who creates the first refugees and curses them with hardship..." (p. 23) How do you feel about God's reaction to Adam and Eve?
2. Do you find Kandiah's response to God's reaction helpful (especially p. 24, the top of p. 27 and the bottom of p. 29)?
3. Do you think God can be both stranger and friend? [See pp. 30-31]
4. Kandiah says we become dislocated within ourselves and with others, so we are exiles and strangers. But what hope does he suggest there is in the midst of suffering (pp. 34-38)? How do you feel about this challenge?