



Beryl Fudge

Beryl Fudge, née Paice, was born in New Malden in Surrey. An only child, her parents were very involved in Christ Church, New Malden. Her parents were regular subscribers to BRF's adult Bible reading notes and as soon as she was old enough to read she had the children's notes. She read those for many years before going on to the adult notes, which she's read ever since, 'except for a short period when [she] went to Crusader class and was expected to take the Scripture Union notes instead.' Beryl and her mother attended BRF's 25th Anniversary service in Westminster Central Hall. Here Beryl shares the part BRF notes have played in her life.

'BRF Bible reading notes have been a part of virtually my whole life and I've found them so useful. I've always handed them on to others and organised group subscriptions and Bible reading groups in whatever church I've been in.'

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I was brought up with the Bible and we always went to church. It was an Anglican church, broadly

evangelical, but forward-looking. It was down-to-earth and concerned to help people understand Christian teaching, and that's what BRF's *New Daylight* notes do as well. My husband took *Guidelines* but I couldn't cope with those – too complicated.'

'My faith has always been part of me, since early childhood. There was no big conversion moment but as long as I can remember I've had a series of what you might call "spiritual experiences" which have underlined by faith and made it stronger and helped me to follow what I believed was the right path to take in

life. So now it's completely second nature – my faith has grown, slowly but surely through the years, not through any big Damascus road moment but more through a series of moments when God has felt very, very close – moments which are incredibly special to me.



'Since my husband died I've found a real sanctuary in my home. When I'm alone I'm fine, because I'm so aware of God with me. I don't need distractions – I don't need to fill the space with noise. I just love being quiet. So many of my friends say, "I've got to have the radio on to fill the silence," but I don't feel like that at all.'

Beryl met her husband, Alan, at Lee Abbey, the community and retreat centre in North Devon. 'I'd got to the age of 20/21 and was a bit fed up about not having met anyone,' she says. 'In fact, once I stopped looking for a husband, I found one! I was living at home and had just started work as a florist at the Savoy Hotel in London.'

‘I’d only just gone to the Savoy so I had to wait until everyone else had taken their holidays. It was in October and the vicar in Woking said, “Why don’t you go to Lee Abbey?” He made the arrangements and unbeknown to me, Alan was in exactly the same situation. His vicar also suggested he went to Lee Abbey. So we met there, and three months later we were engaged and that was it.’

Beryl was sorry to leave London when her husband’s work took them to the Abingdon area – ‘Making a wedding bouquet in Abingdon was very different from the kind of work I was used to in London!’ – but after six months in Harwell the young couple settled in Abingdon and Beryl has been there ever since, albeit in three different houses. ‘That was in 1957 and we really didn’t want to come to Abingdon,’ she says, ‘but the Lord had other ideas.’

Beryl and Alan became founder members of Christ Church, on an estate in Abingdon and were very involved from when it was being built. All three of their children, two daughters and a son, were born in Abingdon and she has five grandchildren, two in New Zealand.

Beryl remembers the 25th Anniversary of BRF at Westminster Central Hall in 1947:

‘My father didn’t come, it was just my mother and me. Westminster Central Hall was absolutely packed and we were down in the basement. I’ve no idea who took the service but the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret were both there and at one point they came down to the basement and walked through, speaking to people down there. I was only about 14 at the

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time but, as I’ve said, I was already reading BRF Bible reading notes and have been reading them ever since.’

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Beryl’s Bible reading remains an important part of her day, though her routine has changed over the years. ‘At one time it was

something I did last thing at night but now I always do it immediately after breakfast.’

She says, ‘I’ve got quite a few friends who also take the notes and we discuss them at our Bible study group. I find there’s so much in them every day. What I most value about the notes is the way that they connect both the Old and New Testament scriptures with what’s happening here and now; they show how the Bible relates to the present day and they give you so much to work on and think about.’

‘I find that people who do read the notes and grapple with the questions they raise, have a deeper, more vibrant and resilient faith. It’s not a selfish thing to do – you’ve got to take care and responsibility for yourself and your faith.’

How, then, does Beryl envisage the next 100 years?

‘It’ll be interesting to see what happens with the centenary: how responsive people are. It would be good if it’s a way of encouraging people to write in, to establish a real to-and-fro exchange between readers, writers and editors, and with BRF as an organisation. That sort of conversation is very helpful for all concerned. BRF has lasted 100 years so it must be doing something right! Perhaps it’s because it publishes a range of Bible reading notes, so there’s something for everyone. It obviously serves a very important purpose for many thousands of Christians.’



BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard
Abingdon OX14 3FE
+44 (0)1865 319700
enquiries@brf.org.uk | brf.org.uk