



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

### Deuteronomy 25: 1-3 'The Difference Between Right and Wrong'

<sup>1</sup> Suppose two persons have a dispute and enter into litigation, and the judges decide between them, declaring one to be in the right and the other to be in the wrong. <sup>2</sup> If the one in the wrong deserves to be flogged, the judge shall make that person lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of lashes proportionate to the offence. <sup>3</sup> Forty lashes may be given but not more; if more lashes than these are given, your neighbour will be degraded in your sight.

Have you heard that phrase: 'The customer is always right'? I am sure you will have done! You may well even have kept it on the tip of your tongue when returning an unwanted item, a product that doesn't quite meet expectation, clothing that doesn't fit, or goods that are damaged. We can easily slip into a mindset of self-righteousness, can't we? I am the customer, I am right, I need to be heard, agreed with, and at the end of this transaction, I am the one who need to get my own way.



Once upon a time, this applied only to customers and shops. However, in the last 20-30 years our culture has changed enormously and we are now customers – or consumers – of all sorts of things. We choose not only our shopping, but the school our children attend, the hospital for our surgery, our utilities, and we are consequently bombarded with 'customer satisfaction' surveys checking out how we found a service. There is a risk, of course, in thinking that we are always right – that as a customer we must be. Definitely there's a risk of arrogance, or at least a loss of humility. We also may run the risk of assuming that, if we are right, then 'the other' must then be wrong – and life is not always so neatly polarised in this way.

As I write this, I watch with some despair the volatility in the United States political system, as the new President is about to be inaugurated (by the date of this Devotion hopefully he will have peacefully been installed). It seems as if there is an arrogance on a remarkable, collective scale from those who cannot accept a democratic election that was, by any sensible assessment, run overwhelmingly fairly, and checked through several dozen investigative legal processes. The evidence is ignored simply it seems, because of a desire to believe what is wanted to be believed, even if there's no evidence to back it up. I wonder if the more we are told that we are consumers, customers, entitled to get what we want, and who must be inherently in the right – the less likely we can accept simply... that sometimes we might be wrong.

Don't worry, I am not going to suggest that Deuteronomist punishments should be applied to those who are wrong. You and I will get many things wrong in our lifetime – in life, politics, church – we're bound to! Consequently, we need to live with the reality of mistake, error, and hindsight. We do this best not when we claim infallibility or superiority, but when we learn from experience and one another. May God equip us with humility in abundance for these days!

**Prayer:** God of mercy, forgive our foolishness and partial understanding, our slowness to understand, our intransigence, and reluctance to admit weakness. Forgive us when we cause hurt by our arrogance, and when we so hastily look for fault in others. Thank you, Lord, for your gracious forgiveness to us, and your transforming love. Amen.