



Dear Friends,

Now that my grandson is two years old, he is allowed to have the occasional sweet treat. Up until this recent milestone, no sugary treats were allowed to pass his lips other than fruit like bananas, grapes and mandarins.

This week, I decided to treat him. When I mind him, we usually take a walk down to the local shopping strip near where he lives and pass by a Greek café. I have been eyeing this place off, ever since I regularly began to look after him weekly. Once his parents gave me the green light to treat him, I was determined that this would be where we would enjoy our first café date.

What drew me to this café were the Greek men huddled in animated conversation around the outdoor tables enjoying a communal coffee and pastry. As I passed by them weekly with my grandson, I would look on longingly, hoping that someday, my grandson and I would join them.

That day arrived this week. After receiving his parents' blessing to finally treat him, we made our way to the high street intent on stopping at the café for coffee and sweets. My only concern was that there may not be an empty spot as its outdoor tables are usually fully occupied.

As we drew near to the café, I held my breath in hopeful anticipation of a vacant table. We were in luck. I ordered for both of us. A Greek biscuit (koulouri) and babycino for my grandson, and a flat white and baklava for me. I had already had a flat white at home, so I decided against a Greek coffee. Greek coffee comes in a small cup and contains so much coffee that you can feel its gritty texture with every sip. There is also a dark, thick sludge at the bottom of the cup.

We took our seat at an outdoor table surrounded by men not much older than me. My grandson drank his babycino with gusto, and scoffed down his biscuit. The men at an adjoining table were friendly, and engaged warmly with my grandson. One of them, having observed my grandson was drinking a babycino, commented that he once owned and operated a café in a nearby suburb and made babycinos decades earlier, when they were a relatively new thing!

Afterwards, I reflected on our experience. My grandson had enjoyed babycinos previously. But he had not eaten a Greek sweet before, Yet that wasn't what excited me most about our café date. What was most satisfying was introducing him to an entire culture. It was the food and the venue and the people. I loved the whole experience of us sharing coffee and pastries at a café, surrounded by others. We were immersed in a culture and a community.

The experience reminded me of church. When Jesus saves us, he brings us into the community of believers. To belong to Christ is to be immersed in a culture and a community.

A healthy church culture is characterised by worship and fellowship. The church's primary activity is its communal worship each Sunday. Worship is a holistic activity, as we listen to God's word, sing praises, pray, give our money to support gospel ministry and serve each other.

Fellowship is also integral to church life. Fellowship, like worship, is an immersive activity. Food and hospitality are intrinsic to Christian fellowship. The Bible describes heaven as a wedding feast. Jesus often enjoyed dinner parties, and he had a reputation for partying. That's because relationships are best enjoyed over a meal or cuppa. That is why our church does morning tea weekly and holds a monthly community lunch. It's why some growth groups share meals together. It's why we invite each other into our homes or out for a cuppa or a meal.

I hope and pray that your experience of RPC is an immersion in a culture and community, just like that of my grandson and I enjoying our coffee and pastries with the regulars at his local Greek café.

God Bless,
Mark Adams