

17<sup>th</sup> June 2025

## Adjusting

**“The aim of therapy is often that of helping the person to be better adjusted to the existing circumstances, to ‘reality’ as it is frequently called.”**

Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*

Once a month we have a visit from a man from *Ringtons*, a tea and coffee company who deliver to our door (though other tea and coffee outlets are available ...) There’s always the sales’ patter about what’s “on offer”, or a “new line in biscuits”, or “a gift box”, and the like. But this month, on June 10th to be precise, I was surprised to be handed a flier for *Ringtons’* “Christmas Hamper Collection” – precisely 196 days, 13 hours, and 19 minutes before Christmas. (And, no, I *didn’t* work that out, not when I have the internet to do that for me.) “You have to order in well in advance,” the *Ringtons’* man informed me. “Better to be prepared, eh?” Indeed so! But preparing for Christmas more than six months in advance? I’m not so sure.

However, as I flicked through the flier, I discovered phrases like “limited edition”, “spread the cost”, “months of planning”, “pre-ordering”, “stock up for the festive season”, “what you’d like to reserve”. So, it’s just possible that my scepticism about organising Christmas *so* far in advance might be tempered by the need for longer-term planning. It’s a balance, I suppose – what needs to be put in place a long way out from an event, and what can remain spontaneous so that detailed planning doesn’t take over your life. And that balance contains a willingness to adjust to reality.

Sometime, planning can be *so* detailed that there’s no room for manoeuvre. Adjustment is deemed to be impossible. The problem with that is *inflexibility*, a danger that if every detail doesn’t work out as planned, the whole enterprise is deemed to have failed. On the other hand, when no planning is done, things can be a shambolic, because little consideration has been given to unexpected twists and turns. There’s *too much* flexibility, and spontaneity doesn’t always come to the rescue.

The German psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Erich Fromm, is right. Of course we need planning, structure, order in our lives. But we have to be prepared to adjust to existing circumstances, to face reality – whatever that might be. I wonder if that might mean I should adjust my order with the *Ringtons’* man the next time he calls.

### A prayer for today

*Living God, as I adjust to reality, please stay constant with me. Amen.*