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*editorial*

One of the most admired Christian leaders to have emerged in the 20th century has been the English evangelical John Stott. No other figure has exercised such a profound influence in international Christian circles, with the possible exception of Dr Billy Graham.

Even at 80, John Stott remains a prolific preacher and writer and the guiding force behind the Langham Partnership, a British-based agency that is dedicated to the development of outstanding Christian leadership around the world. To date, the Langham Partnership has helped more than 70 church leaders obtain doctoral qualifications which will enable them to better teach the rising generation of Christians.

One of the most interesting features of the recently-released biography by Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader* (IVP 1999), is the penetrating insight into what makes an extraordinary Christian leader. While much confusion surrounds the nature of leadership and leadership style within the church, John Stott's understanding in these areas is an important contribution to the subject.

At the heart of Stott's desire to lead was the prior calling of God. In 1941 he wrote to his father: "Whatever you may think of it, I have had a definite and irresistible call from God to serve him in the church. During the last three years I have become increasingly conscious of this call, and my life could be summed up in the words 'separated unto the gospel of God'. There is no higher service; I ask no other ... In my life other things do not and cannot come first ... for I am 'separated unto the gospel of God'." In Stott's eyes, Christian leaders must have an absolute commitment to God and his gospel.

The other distinctive strain that runs through Stott's ministry is his emphasis upon leadership style. He insists that Jesus introduced into the world a new style of servant-leadership: "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (Mk 10:44). This is the point at which the Christian mind comes into violent collision with the secular outlook. Christ calls for humility; the world idolises power. There is no possibility of compromise between the two. In this issue we are privileged to explore some of these aspects of New Testament leadership through an exclusive interview with John Stott himself.

Peter Hastie <sup>ap</sup>

# Your humble servant

*Christian leadership must be shaped by Christ, not culture.*



## How important was the influence of your father and mother on your early faith in Christ?

My father influenced me in many ways (not least in his love of nature and his high standards of service), but, since he was a scientific secularist, he did not influence my faith in Christ. However, my mother's mother was a German Lutheran so that my mother raised my sisters and me in Lutheran piety, taking us to church, and encouraging us to read the Bible and "say our prayers" every day. I continued these practices throughout my early years even though at that time I had not come to know Christ.

## You talk about how Christ was knocking loudly on the door of your heart when you were young – what compelled you to respond?

Of course, the correct theological answer to your question is that Christ's knocking (drawing attention to his presence outside) was so insistent that it demanded its own response. But from my point of view, I was so aware of my need –



## John Stott talks to Peter Hastie

being alienated from God and defeated by sin – that it seemed that the most natural thing in the world to do was to open the door and let him in.

And that's what I did.

## How did knowing Christ affect your choice of profession?

While I was still at Rugby School, I used to visit France and Germany during my school vacations so that I could learn French and German. At the time, I thought that I was headed for the Diplomatic or Foreign Service. But after my conversion, two new influences came together. First, I no longer considered a life of diplomatic compromise appealing. I just couldn't get excited about it. Second, I couldn't understand how I had reached the age of 17 without having heard the gospel; it affected me so powerfully that I

longed to spend my life telling others the good news that I'd come to understand.

But it was still a difficult decision to make up my mind to study theology at Cambridge. There were several obstacles in my way. First, I had to face the challenges of liberal theology. This was a daunting task. Liberal theology was the dominant force at Cambridge at the time. Most of the professors were of that persuasion.

But there was also another difficulty with which I had a fierce struggle. The Second World War had broken out and this complicated my situation immensely. At the time I had a strong belief that it was right for me to complete my studies and be ordained, which meant that I gained exemption from military service. My father, on the other hand, who was a Harley Street medical specialist, had enlisted in the Army Medical Service with the rank of a Major General. He found it almost intolerable that he had a son who was not fighting in the war. As a result, our relationship was extremely strained for several years and took some time to recover.

**You say that many people are “hostile to the church, but friendly towards Christ”. What does the world see in Christ that they don’t see reflected in his church?**

I think that many see Jesus as an attractive figure whereas they see hypocrisy and inconsistency in the church. For instance, they see Jesus as a champion of the poor and the oppressed, who lived a simple life, fraternised with sinners, and was constantly at loggerheads with the religious leaders of his day. On the other hand, they see the Church as an establishment organisation, protecting its own privileges and making largely hypocritical claims.

**You have been critical of the low view of Scripture that some within the church have today. How can we raise our view of Scripture?**

I believe that it’s essential that the church should have a high view of both the authority and the relevance of Scripture. It’s a matter of following Jesus. Do we call him Lord? As for authority, we learn it from Jesus. He himself submitted to the authority of the Old Testament in his moral standards, in his understanding of his mission, and in his debates with the Pharisees and Saducees. He also chose, appointed and equipped his apostles to teach in his name, saying “he who listens to you listens to me”.

As for the relevance of Scripture, it’s up to Christian preachers to demonstrate its relevance by applying its teaching to the realities of the day.

**What do you regard as the most important qualities in the life of a Christian leader?**

The essential quality of a leader is the ability to command a following. In order to do this, a leader needs a vision of what could be, and the perseverance to pursue it, irrespective of all obstacles.

**How important is a devotional life of Scripture-reading, meditation and prayer for effective Christian leadership?**

I must say that I have become increasingly concerned about the growing tendency in Christian circles to despise and reject the well-tried practices of daily Bible meditation and prayer. I regret this and declare myself an impenitent believer in the vital importance of these exercises. Jesus himself, quoting Deuteronomy, affirmed that human beings live by the Word of God. So we would be foolish to neglect it. He also taught much about prayer, and

engaged regularly in prayer himself. At the same time, while accepting the necessity of Bible reading and prayer, we must also ensure that they are fresh and do not degenerate into a mere ritual. We should vary our practice, and look to the Holy Spirit to breathe life into our discipline.

**What has been your own personal practice?**

Immediately after my conversion I was introduced to the Scripture Union. I have been a strong SU supporter ever since. But the SU takes us right through Scripture only once in five years, and I reckon that this is not enough for pastors and other leaders.

So I am very grateful that Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones introduced me about 40 years ago to the Bible Reading Calendar produced in 1842 in Dundee, Scotland, by Robert Murray McCheyne. It takes us through the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice every year. It’s quite exacting, because it requires reading four chapters a day, but on New Year’s Day we do not begin with Genesis 1-4, but with the four great beginnings of Scripture, namely Genesis 1 (the birth of the universe), Ezra 1 (the rebirth of Israel after Babylonian exile), Matthew 1 (the birth of Christ) and Acts 1-2 (the birth of the Body of Christ). Nothing has helped me more than this to gain an overview of Scripture, as biblical themes appear, disappear and re-appear.

As for prayer, the greatest aid I have found is to turn my biblical meditations into appropriate prayer, responding to God’s Word.

**Should Christians follow secular concepts and practices of leadership?**

Reading secular books on management and leadership development can certainly be helpful, because clearly some leadership skills are the same in both Christian and non-Christian circles. At the same time, we need to read these books critically, for Jesus introduced into the world a new concept of servant leadership, which he deliberately set in contrast to the authoritarian style characteristic of the world (Mark 10:42, 43). This means that Christians have to be alert and discerning

as they engage with many of the modern ideas on leadership and management.

**Christian leaders have to work in a community of faith that is constantly disturbed by moral failure, disunity and immaturity. What encouragements do leaders have to persevere?**

You are right, of course, to describe the Christian community as often disturbed by moral failure, disunity and immaturity. It’s a very grievous fact. How, then, can Christian leaders persevere in such a situation?

First, whenever seeking to restore an offender, we need to remember our own vulnerability and even frailty. We are all prone to failure ourselves. As Paul warns: “But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). Second, we are likely to persevere if we respond to each situation with a combination of prophetic witness (refusing to lower our standards or condone sin) and pastoral care (refusing to break bruised reeds or snuff out smouldering wicks). It’s not easy to combine the prophetic and the pastoral, firmness and gentleness, discipline and forgiveness, but we must struggle to do so.

**The rise of “celebrity” in our world creates special problems for the church – for instance, the dangers of cult-followings and factionalism. What strategies should leaders follow to overcome the damage of factionalism?**

The Corinthian church was a notable example of a personality cult, that is, of “factionalism”. Different church members were giving their allegiance to different leaders. “I belong to Paul; I belong to Apollos; I belong to Cephas” (1 Cor. 1:12). Paul was absolutely horrified by this. “What do you think we are?” he asked incredulously, that you should give such exaggerated deference to us? He did not even ask “who do you think we are?” He deliberately used the neuter in place of the masculine, in order to demote himself in their eyes. And throughout his protest he urged that we should learn to boast not in ourselves or in other human beings but in Christ and his cross.

We should do the same, and should ask our friends and/or our church elders to warn us whenever they see signs of vanity or boastfulness in us.

**Many of the power struggles that mar business and political organisations also trouble the evangelical church. How does the lust for power manifest itself in Christian circles?**

“Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” These well-known words of Lord Acton in the middle of the 19th century become specially poignant when set in their context. Acton was a Roman Catholic and argued strongly against the attribution of infallibility to the Pope in the First Vatican Council (1870). He saw this as power corrupting the church.

We see the same tendency today in denominational disputes, in leaders jockeying for position, in parachurch organisations dreaming of developing a world empire, and even in preachers, since the elevated pulpit is a dangerous place for any child of Adam to occupy.

How can leaders deal with this, when it is mainly leaders who are inflicted with this disease? Maybe the most effective strategy is for leaders to surround themselves with friends who are not “yes-men”, let alone toadies who fawn on them, but honest-brokers who know that “faithful are the wounds of a friend”.

**Paul suggests that God chooses very unlikely people to be members of his Church – people who are often weak and despised. Are the leaders of the church meant to be unimpressive?**

What Paul is doing at the end of 1 Corinthians 1 is to give an example of his “power through weakness” theme. As the aristocratic lady, the Countess of Huntingdon, friend of Wesley and Whitefield, said, she was grateful for the letter ‘m’ in the sentence “not many” (1 Cor. 1:26). For Paul didn’t write that “not

any” powerful people were called, but that “not many” were. Some noble, rich and strong people were called, including some in Corinth like Gaius and Erastus, not to mention Paul himself.

But strong people will not be saved by their strength. If they hope to be saved,

***There are to be no gurus in the Christian community.***



they have to humble themselves and become weak, so that the power of Christ will exalt them.

**In today’s world, leaders are meant to be communication-specialists. Is self-confidence in public-speaking a desirable quality in Christian leaders?**

Christian leaders certainly need to be able to communicate, and should benefit from all the skills and techniques of communication which are available. But at a deeper level the Holy Spirit is the communication specialist. It is he who illumines the mind, pricks the conscience, fires the heart and moves the will, so as to elicit from the hearers “the obedience of faith”. “Nobody can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except through the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3).

Self-confidence is incompatible with this. Paul’s argument in the Corinthian letters is that God’s power is demonstrated best in human weakness. He came to Corinth, he wrote, in weakness, fear and trembling, and therefore put his trust in the power of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

**You have said that Christians, especially leaders, are called to confirm and defend the gospel. But you have also said that those who relish controversy have a form of spiritual sickness. How and when should Christians engage in controversy?**

Your question assumes (rightly) that there is a difference between reluctant engagement in controversy and relishing it. When a central issue of the faith is at stake, we must take action. We would be “hirelings” rather than true shepherds (John 10), if we didn’t. Such central issues would specially relate to the person and work of Christ, since to deny the divine-human person of Jesus is antichrist (1 Jn 2:18-23) and to deny the gospel of grace is anathema (Gal. 1:6-9). Today these are still living issues, and so are the finality and uniqueness of Jesus Christ, which are increasingly being rejected in pluralistic cultures.

**Is it ever right for a leader to think of the church to which they belong as “my church”? How should Christian leaders think of people whom they are called to lead?**

When the Corinthian factions were claiming the patronage of different leaders, their slogans were “I belong to Paul”, “I belong to Apollos” (1 Cor. 1:12). But Paul was outraged by this personality cult. He sought to correct it by reversing the relationships implied. He wrote: “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas...” (1 Cor. 3:21).

So if anybody belongs to anybody in the church, it is the leaders who belong to the members, not vice-versa. It is disgraceful that bishops ever encouraged people to address them as “my Lord Bishop” and to sign their letters “your obedient servant”. It would be much more healthy and more scriptural, therefore, if leaders referred not to “my church” or “my people” but rather to “the people whom God has called me to serve”.

**Should Christian leaders, especially clergy, think of themselves as managers or social workers or psychotherapists or pastor-teachers? In view of the fact that every Christian has a**

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### ministry, what role do clergy have?

Yes, you are right in saying that all Christians are called to ministry. Because we are followers of him who said "I came not to be ministered to, but to minister", it's inconceivable that we should spend our lives in any other way than in ministry. But I did not say "the ministry". We do a great disservice to the church whenever we use the definite article and refer to the pastorate as "the ministry", for then we give the impression that the pastorate is the only ministry there is. But diakonia (ministry) is a generic word; it lacks all specificity until you add an adjective – pastoral ministry, social ministry, medical ministry, and many more.

To what ministry, then, are pastors called? Their primary calling is to a teaching ministry. This is clear from 1 Timothy 3, where Paul lists 10 conditions of eligibility for the presbyterate. Nine of them are moral and spiritual, eg self-control, hospitality and freedom from covetousness. Only one condition could be described as a "professional" qualification. This is didaktikos, having a gift for teaching. If, therefore, presbyters must be gifted to teach, it is evident that their ministry is primarily a teaching ministry.

**You recently said that "there is too much autocracy in the leaders of the Christian community, in defiance of the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, and not enough love and gentleness". How should leaders deal with these tendencies?**

My point was that, unless we are careful, our model of leadership may be shaped more by culture than by Christ. And cultural models, which are often transplanted uncritically into the church, all seem to be authority models. For example, the model of the African tribal chief, or the Latin American male and his "machismo", the South Asian guru, or the Confucian teacher are all authority models.

But there are to be no gurus in the Christian community. This is surely what Jesus meant when he told us that we are not to call anybody our Rabbi, master or father (Mt. 23:8-12). That is, we are not to adopt towards anybody in the church, or require anybody to adopt towards us, the dependent relationship of child to parent, servant to master or pupil to guru. He added that outside in the world leaders exercise authority, but "not so with you" (Mk 10:42, 43). Discipline may be necessary in the church, but it will need to be exercised collectively as Paul taught (eg 1 Cor. 5:4), and "gently" (Gal. 6:1).

### You have been instrumental in founding the Langham Trust. How will this trust help develop future leaders for the evangelical church?


Believing that God wants his people to grow up, and that they grow chiefly by the Word of God, the goal of the Langham Partnership is to help raise the standards of biblical preaching. To this end we are developing three ministries. The first is Langham Literature, because you can't preach if you don't study, and you can't study if you don't have books. Secondly, Langham Scholarships, enabling younger Third World scholars to gain a doctorate and return to their own country to teach in a seminary, because the seminary is the key institution in the church. And finally,

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*John Stott is Rector Emeritus of All Souls Church, Langham Place, London, and president of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. He is known worldwide as a leading evangelical thinker, writer and Bible teacher.*

*Peter Hastie is minister of Ashfield Presbyterian Church, Sydney, and AP's themes editor.*



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# Just managing

*Christian leaders are stewards – with a higher model and standard.*

John Stott states in his book *The Preacher's Portrait* that the metaphor of stewardship teaches us that the preacher does not supply his own message; he is supplied with it. Stott reminds us, however, that all Christian people are God's stewards and that we have been entrusted with certain "goods", not for our own benefit, but for the blessing of the entire household of God.

The parables of the talents illustrate the Christian's responsibility to neither hoard nor waste; rather, we are to consider the gifts or goods God has placed in our hands. We are to improve them by seeking out opportunities. It is this practical Christian work, the work of administration within the church, that this article focuses on.

So, what does it mean to "manage Christianly"?

Too often the world attempts to claim moral superiority over the church with business fads and protective legislation. In the corporate world "values-driven leadership" has now become a tired cliché. Such trends are often perversions of basic Christian principles.

Consider these "commandments" and "golden rule".

- Remain directed toward purpose and meaning.
- Don't let money, power or status consume you.
- Speak graciously.
- Rest and rejuvenate.
- Respect those with experience and maturity.
- Practice service, not malice.
- Show integrity and fidelity.
- Treat people fairly.
- Be sincere.
- Work hard.

Or, it pays to be as honest to others as you would have them be honest to you.

Such principles may sound nice but



**Wayne Richards**

they are a poor shadow of the ultimate business code of ethics which existed as early as the time of Pharaoh Amenhotep II, King of Egypt, around 1450 BC. We know them as the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20). First published on Mount Sinai, when the Lord spoke through his prophet, Moses, they represent a godly and outward-looking set of values rather than an inward, selfish set of ideals.

As Christians we have a better code than the world will ever dream up. The world wants a business value system without God. We must shun that notion in administering the affairs of the church and continually seek God's leading and help in all that we do. We are to be wary of being unequally yoked with worldly values. For instance, we do not seek mere excellence but the glory of God.

We should be dealing with the trust that God has given us as only stewards in the household of God would do. We have a heavenly accountability – a higher standard. We are not to emulate the world; instead, we are to consciously follow Christ's example. As the creator of all human life and enterprise, he has given us a superior business model.

Staying focused and on target is one of the hardest battles we have in living the Christian life. It is no different in business, especially in the business of God's church. The biggest trap is to try to do all that is good. It cannot be done. We often have to choose between the good and the best. Good strategy includes knowing what you are not going to do, and why. Being able to choose between a series of

good alternatives is vital so that we can turn our face and effort toward that which is even better.

The apostle Paul had already pinned this issue down in the early church by AD 60. In Philippians 1:10 his prayer is that his readers "may be able to discern what is best". He wants them to make excellent choices that are motivated by love, knowledge and deep insight.

Even though the apostle's focus is on spiritual matters, the point is well made. It's relatively easy to avoid wasting time on the less fruitful or wrong things that are obvious. However, to accomplish the best things you have to make some hard choices. Often that means you will have to drop some things which are good. They may not be wrong in themselves but they may frustrate you in reaching your ultimate goal. It is important to learn how to trade-off good things for much better things – to stay on track. It's OK to say "no" (nicely).

This principle is the foundation of all prioritisation, and it's the hardest to practise. It's as true for achieving worthwhile Christian business goals as achieving personal sanctification.

Jesus sets the standard of leadership. "But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27). This transforms the world's flawed model. Without a motivation to serve (Christ and others), leadership becomes self-serving. The organisation we serve does not belong to us. If we cannot see that our serving and leading is about serving the Lord in the gospel, then we have lost our corporate reason for existence.

Paul did not regard handling administrative things as unimportant. He delighted to serve in such things. He says, in writing to the Corinthians, "we carry the offering, which we administer in order

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to honour the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men." (2 Cor. 8:19bff)

Today, the word "administrator" suggests a limited approach to stewardship. An administrator might organise and control. This is fairly reactive. Is it enough? A manager would plan as well. This is now becoming pro-active. It is like seeking the opportunity to make those talents grow.

A leader, on the other hand, exercises the desire to give meaning and direction through service. He also adds to all these activities by innovating – becoming a change agent for Christ.

Finally, an entrepreneur Christian steward will, in the eyes of the world, bear some personal risk. However, in the eyes of the church that risk is really faith exercised in prayerful trust. It is not acting unsafely, but rather courageously.

**C**hristian managers will put the Bible ahead of tradition, faith ahead of bureaucracy and the Spirit ahead of meetings. We need fewer office-bearers and committee members and more entrepreneurs for God; those who will thoughtfully plan, lead and control on the basis of God's promises as well as bring about change and accept full responsibility.

Jethro (one of the earliest business consultants) gave some perceptive advice to his son-in-law. He told Moses how to better organise and delegate things; to think imaginatively and to lead by involv-

ing others in servanthood. He recommended a management structure for resolving problems. Moses listened to his father-in law and implemented the plan (Ex. 18:13–27). This event was just two chapters before receiving the perfect code of ethics for running society (let alone an organisation).

Moses traded off doing something good, and which he could do well – namely, making judicial decisions – in preparation for doing something much more important: that which was best.

Action based on knowledge is superior to procrastination, but action flavoured with wisdom is always better. Proverbs tells us that the basis of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. Augustine is helpful in explaining the difference between wisdom and knowledge. In commenting on Job's words, "The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding" (28:28), he sees piety as different from knowing. Augustine observed: "In thus distinguishing, it must be understood that wisdom belongs to contemplation, knowledge to action."

A Christian manager seeks not only to act with the available knowledge, but also finds time to ponder God's view of that action. That is the fundamental dif-

ference between secular management and wise Christian stewardship – timeless information integrated with timely information.

**T**he courageously wise manager is a thoughtful and contemplative manager. Contemplation seasoned from a personal relationship with God through prayer and his written Word will help wise decision-making.

My personal business mission has been "To provide meaning in the context of service while avoiding the distractions". In other words, what is the purposeful (kingdom) focus in any endeavour? How "other-centred" are things operationally? Are things on track for delivering what I committed to?

These biblical priorities have helped me over the past 10 years in corporate life and in every kind of endeavour. Yet it's always a struggle. Foremost among the texts that have played an influential role in shaping my understanding of Christian management have been these: "do not be foolish, but understand" (Eph. 5:17), "serve wholeheartedly" (Eph. 6:7), and "discern what is best" (Phil. 1:10). They seem to sum up the chief requirements of those who are required to exercise a faithful stewardship under God.

*Wayne Richards is general manager of the Presbyterian Church in NSW. He has a Masters degree in Business Administration and has 30 years experience in corporate life at general manager and director level. He is a member of Revesby Presbyterian Church.*

ap

***It is important to learn how to trade off good things for much better things – to stay on track. It's OK to say "no" (nicely).***



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# A modest ambition

*Women lead more than they know. Make the example godly.*

**P**oliticians who lie to Parliament; unfaithful football captains; barristers who rot the tax system – leadership has got a lot of bad press lately. Debate rages on the relevance of a leader's private life. Is a person's private life separate from what he does as a leader? In the community, the jury's still out.

What about the Christian leader? Are Christians' private lives separate from what they do as leaders? The Bible's answer is a resounding no. Passages like 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9 make it clear that a leader's private life is very relevant. The Christian leads by example. The Christian life cannot be segmented. We must aim for godliness in all areas of our lives.

Godliness isn't restricted to our role – as Sunday school teachers, Bible study leaders, music directors, president of the women's group or playgroup organisers. It includes what we do at home behind closed doors, how we act at the local shops out of the sight of fellow Christians and what we do at work when we're around non-Christian people. Leaders need to "walk the walk" and not just "talk the talk".

But is this just the case with formal positions of leadership? No. All of us



**Carmelina  
Read**

"lead" people in one way or another. Mature Christians set an example for people who have just become Christians. New Christians set an example for their non-Christian family and friends. Older women set an example for younger women (Titus 2).

The Bible records the lives of many women who set examples for us even though they were not in formal positions of leadership. Tabitha was so impressive in her good works and acts of charity that the widows of Joppa wept for her when she died (Acts 9:36-43). Jesus said that the act of the woman who anointed him for his burial would be recounted in memory of her whenever the gospel is proclaimed (Mt. 26:13). Timothy's faith in Christ was nurtured by the sincere faith of his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5).

In this article, I'd like to suggest some thoughts on how Christian women can lead by example regardless of whether their leadership is formal or not.

Children: Generally speaking, women are the primary carers of children. That

means we're a huge influence on our children. Our example to them will matter. My little boy Joel giggles with glee when his Daddy pulls out the Eager Beaver Bible every morning after breakfast. He loves me to pray with him at night when I put him to bed and he makes his displeasure known if I try to hurry the bedtime routine! Now it would be easy for me to act as if praying and reading the Bible with them is all I have to do to help my children grow up as Christians. But what about how I live my life? Kids watch us very carefully. They see us at the shops. They watch us relate to other people. They watch our every move.

**S**o what kind of an example are we setting for our children? Do our children ever see us read the Bible by ourselves? Do they see us pray on our own and with our husbands? A few years ago at a beach mission, I sat around with some young adult leaders into the early hours of the morning (now I rarely make it past 10pm!). I asked one of them what was the most influential thing her parents had done for her. She said: "I saw them regularly read their Bible and pray. They proved to me that God is real and that the Bible truly is God's word. They weren't hypocrites encouraging me to do one thing and yet not doing it themselves." Wouldn't it be wonderful if our children could say the same of us?

Our "private" life can't be separated from our leadership of children. Leading

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our children in the ways of the Lord is not just about doing devotions with them or sending them to Sunday school. It's also about leading by example.

And while we're on the topic of Sunday school, this challenge also applies to anyone involved in ministry with children. We might prepare the most interactive lessons and run the most Gospel-centred kids' club. But if our private lives don't match what we teach, we need to seriously reconsider our leadership. Kids will notice if looking "hip" is more important to you than modesty. Teenage girls will notice whether their leaders treat their boyfriends with all purity, as a brother (1 Tim. 5:2). And they'll follow your lead.

Wives: What we do as married women will provide leadership to other women and children (Titus 2:3-6). Recently, I watched an interview with a politician who had an affair with a married man. She kept insisting that her private life was nobody else's business. The question I want to ask is, what example has she set for others?

**A**re we faithful to our husbands? Do we treat them with respect in public *and* at home? I'm sure we've all met the woman who speaks honourably of her husband in public, but rules the roost at home, constantly putting him down. What does your role as a wife model to other women, especially to younger women (Titus 2:3-4)? Do we lead younger women to graciously submit to their husbands as they do to the Lord (Eph. 5:22)? Or do we encourage them to rebel and

spurn God's gift of male headship?

This isn't to say that we must pretend our marriages are perfect. But the way we speak to our husbands at home will influence others. This is especially important as women who haven't grown up in godly Christian homes come into our sphere of influence. Will our marriages match God's plan for marriage? Will they be different to non-Christian marriages?


When I became a Christian, I spent a lot of time at the home of a family in my first church. I saw the way the wife related to her husband. She was servant-hearted, she worked hard at not giving him the cold shoulder when he wronged her, she spoke respectfully of him to others, she graciously accepted correction and tried hard to put his needs above her own without resenting it (Phil. 2:1-11). What a breath of fresh air she was to me and so many others. A fine example to follow.

Beauty: Everywhere we turn, it's there. Television, magazines, movies, department stores all tell us we must be beautiful. And how? Label clothing, shoes, anti-wrinkle creams, botox injections, weight reduction plans – the list goes on. None of these things are inherently bad. But what priority do they have in our lives? Is outer

beauty more important to you than what you're like on the inside? If it isn't, then is that the example you set for other people? Do women see you working hard at becoming more godly and growing in inner beauty (1 Tim. 2:9-10 and 1 Pet. 3:1-6)? Or would people say that how you look is a greater priority to you?

**O**ne of the most attractive women I know doesn't wear expensive clothes. She dresses modestly. You wouldn't call her trendy. In fact, she often looks the worse for wear because she's tired from looking after her active children. And yet, so many women, married and single, keep telling me what a beautiful person she is. They tell me how much they respect her and what a great example she sets for them. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people could say that of us?

Of course we'll fail in all these areas. We'll need to keep coming back to the God of grace for forgiveness and cleansing from our sin. But the same grace that saves us teaches us to say no to ungodliness and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives (Titus 2:11), lives that will set an example to others. We can't buy into the secular lie that what we do in "private" is irrelevant to our leadership. Christian women should lead by example in all areas of their lives.

*Carmelina Read worked as an environmental lawyer, has a degree from Moore Theological College, and is married to Jeff Read, minister of Chatswood Presbyterian Church, Sydney.* 

***We can't buy into the secular lie that what we do in "private" is irrelevant to our leadership.***

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# Gaining face

*Get in training now for a glorious prospect, says Broughton Knox.*

**T**he final word in the Bible about human fulfillment is found in Revelation 22:6, where the bliss of eternity is described in the simple phrase "they shall see God's face". That means we will be in relationship with God in a personal way; we will be in his presence, speaking with him, face-to-face. This is the culmination of the human story that began in Genesis 1 in the Garden of Eden. God's purpose in creating man is that it would culminate in full fellowship in heaven when we will see God face-to-face (Rev. 21, 22).

Since this fellowship with God is the ultimate objective in God giving us life, it should be our objective. We should seek God's face now. In Psalm 27:8 we read, "Seek his face" and our response is, "Your face, Lord, I will seek." This command is also our greatest privilege. There is no higher honour than that we should be invited, indeed commanded, to seek the face of God; to seek his presence and fellowship while we wait for the coming of Christ when that friendship and fellowship will be deepened and completed because we shall see him as he is. It has been God's purpose that his people should seek his face, for those who seek him will find him.

In the Old Testament the whole people

## IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



of God assembled at Sinai. There, God spoke to them face-to-face; and later, at Jerusalem, the whole people of Israel used to meet at stated times to seek God's presence in his temple. For God is related to us not only individually; he is also related to us in the group – where two or three are met together in his name. Indeed, Christ has promised to be present on these occasions and the word "church" reminds us that we stand in God's heavenly presence in a group because the word "church" means a group or gathering.

However, we are also individuals and God speaks to us in our inner personality. For the Israelites there was the "tent of meeting" outside the Israelite camp and "everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tent of meeting" (Ex. 33:7). Those who seek him will always find him and this encounter does not leave us as we were before. Fellowship with God through his Spirit transforms.

You may remember how this was shown outwardly in the case of Moses – whenever he came from communing with God, his face shone. It is through the Spirit of God that we meet with God, and this was the individual Israelite experience. Thus the psalmist prayed "Cast me not from your presence. Take not your Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11).

**I**n the New Covenant our knowledge of God has deepened, for God has revealed himself fully through Jesus, the Son of God, and the Spirit is now given to all God's people. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "God has shone in our hearts to give

the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The Christian's experience is that as we have fellowship with Jesus his glory shines in us just as the glory of God shone in Moses as the result of speaking with God face-to-face.

In 2 Cor. 3:18 Paul applied the passage about Moses to the Christian. As we look into the face of Jesus through fellowship with him, we are transformed into the glory of Christ. That is, Christ's character shines out in us. His Spirit is seen through us and this is the glory of God.

We seek this glory in Christ who is the glory of God. As we wait for his return we should seek his presence through prayer. In fact, we should let no day go by without prayer. The same applies to reading God's Word. We need a regular time and a regular scheme. This is God's command, "Seek his face" and our reply should be "Your face, Lord, I will seek", seeking him now as well as looking to the day when he will come in the glory of his kingly rule.

**W**e should seek him not only in our private prayer but also seek him in the local congregation. If we are the leader of our family, we will take our family with us to church to seek Christ's face together because both family and church are relationships reflecting the relationship of ourselves and Christ. The relationship of the family will be reflected in the Church and the relationship in Church will be reflected back into the family.

What is your reason for going to church? Is it to seek the face of Jesus in anticipation of his return, as his coming reminds us? For if this is your motivation for church-going, then you will seek him firstly in your own private prayers, then in your family and friendship groupings, as well as in the Sunday congregation. The purpose of life and its culmination is to see the face of God, to be in his presence. Has that got a grip of you? The command is clear, "seek his face" and our reply should be, "Your face, Lord, I will seek".

*Dr Broughton Knox was principal of Moore College, Sydney. This is an edited extract of a broadcast on Radio 2CH in July 1975. <sup>ap</sup>*

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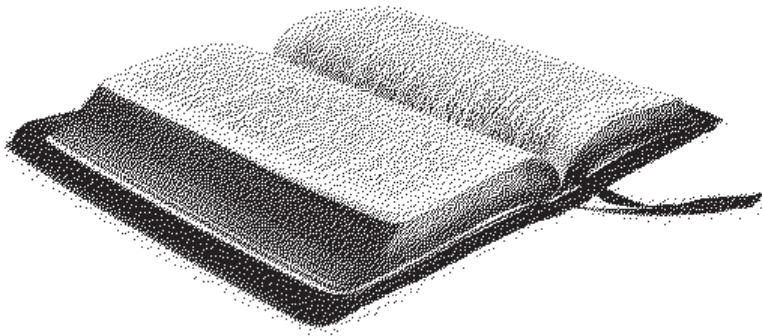
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# Word for the wise



**Leaders God can use:  
20 daily bible studies in Esther**

**W**hat we need today more than anything is leadership that has a truly spiritual focus, a style of leadership that is not centred on man and his personal achievements, but on what God requires of us: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8). Only the Church can provide this sort of leadership.

In the book of Esther (the only book in the whole Bible that makes no explicit mention of God!) we find two characters through whom God rescues his people, and we see the leadership qualities they display. They are Esther and her cousin, Mordecai. We find others like Xerxes and Vashti who are motivated by what "seems like a good idea at the time" instead of by solid guiding principles. And then there is Haman, the archetypal modern corporate boss who wants to manipulate every circumstance for his own advantage.

Will you ask God this month to use these readings in Esther to make you into a better leader for him? Who knows but that you have come to [your present] position for such a time as this? (Esther 4:14b).

**Bruce Christian**

## DAY 1

### Impressive leadership

#### THE PASSAGE

ESTHER 1:1-11

**THE POINT** Xerxes' kingship was certainly impressive! But he was hardly a good role model for leadership. The impression he created was superficial, transitory, and only serving the lusts of the flesh. There are corporate leaders in courts today because of this sort of irresponsible liberality. Xerxes was in trouble.

#### THE PARTICULARS

- Xerxes was responsible (under God, without realising it!) for a very extensive and populous realm (his share-holders?).
- His 6 months Expo was to flaunt his own grandeur.
- He spared no expense on himself or those he wanted to impress.
- The excessive consumption of wine resulted in Xerxes treating his wife as goods and chattels instead of giving to her the care and respect which was his duty as her husband and head.

#### TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What aspects of Xerxes' attitude and lifestyle do you find disturbing? Are there issues in your own personal life, family life, business life or Church life that need to be addressed?
- What was Xerxes' most basic problem? Is this what is at the heart of so many problems in Western society and culture today?

## DAY 2

### The greater sin

#### THE PASSAGE

ESTHER 1:12-22

**THE POINT** What Vashti did (or rather didn't do) was quite wrong. Her husband had the God-given right (although I doubt the approval) to make the request he did. An important principle of relationships had to be upheld. But Xerxes was primarily the one at fault. If he was a good and godly leader of his family he would not have tried to parade his wife's beauty sensually before his intoxicated guests. This was quite wrong. Perhaps the failure of wives today to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22-24) is often a direct result of the men's failure to be godly husbands (Eph. 5:21, 25ff). Let us put the primary blame where it belongs.

#### THE PARTICULARS

- Xerxes should not have made the demand of Vashti.
- God's principle of headship in the family had to be upheld.
- God uses even man's sinful behaviour to fulfil his sovereign purposes in human history (as we will see throughout Esther).

#### TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Would Xerxes get away with his treatment of Vashti in our society today?
- Has our change in attitude to relationships in the family today been all gain? What difficulties have arisen?

**DAY 3** *Who picked Esther?*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 2:1-9

**THE POINT** Although a positive aspect of Xerxes' leadership skills could be his willingness to consult others for advice and to delegate authority, it seems that his advisers were only yes-men. Moreover, man's plans and schemes are never a match for God's power to work out his purposes even within man's framework.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- Xerxes was totally insensitive to any part he might have played in Vashti's downfall and failed to search his own heart.
- Xerxes adopted a consultative and delegatory leadership style.
- Xerxes' 'successful applicant' profile for his new queen showed no understanding of God's pattern for the marriage relationship or for leadership (cf 1 Peter 3:1-7).
- Thankfully, the sovereign Lord did have matters under control!

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Xerxes looked for a queen with the sort of qualities he thought were important. Without overriding this, God provided him with the sort of queen he needed. What does this teach us about trusting God when our circumstances seem out of control?
- How many different factors led to the final selection of Esther? Does God's sovereignty eliminate our responsibility to obey?

**DAY 4** *The right way to treat a woman*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 2:10-18

**THE POINT** What a contrast between Esther and Vashti, and between Mordecai and Xerxes! Esther submitted to everything required of her and made no extra demands of her own. Mordecai was concerned only for Esther's welfare (verse 11). We can also see here a picture of the painstaking and patient way Christ is preparing the Church as his Bride for his Wedding Banquet.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- It seems that Mordecai was sufficiently politically astute, with his ear close enough to the ground (as we'll see tomorrow), to see a distinct advantage in keeping Esther's nationality secret.
- Mordecai was constantly concerned for Esther's well-being.
- Esther's widespread acceptance, even within the competitive atmosphere of the harem, is a strong indication of her godliness.
- God is often working on a much more patient time scale than we realise. His meticulous and loving attention to detail as he gets us ready to be Christ's perfect Bride is often hard for us to accept. Esther is a good role model for us as a Church.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Are you accepting patiently the process by which God is preparing you for heaven? What about how he is preparing others?

**DAY 5** *Duty of care*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 2:19-23

**THE POINT** Solomon wrote, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Esther the humble, obedient child became Esther the humble, obedient Queen. But Mordecai's duty of care also extended to his being a responsible whistle-blower citizen when the King's life was threatened. Mordecai's responsible actions would become the building blocks for God's later sovereign intervention.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- Esther did not forget the things she learnt as a child even when she became Queen in the most powerful nation. (This ought to encourage us as Christian parents to be faithful in this 'duty of care' we have towards the children God has given us.)
- Mordecai was unafraid to speak out against wrong even if his own life may have been at risk. Do we shirk this duty of care?
- Esther's humility allowed her to give Mordecai the rightful credit even though she could have taken the opportunity to improve her own (competitive?) standing before the King.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Do you think there is an increasing tendency in our society to run away from responsibility, whether as parents or as citizens? What consequences are we seeing in both areas?

**DAY 6** *"You shall be as gods..."*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 3:1-6

**THE POINT** The pivotal sin of Adam, that exiled us all from a living world with God and doomed us to a dying world without him, was the sin of thinking he could change places with God. Adam's descendants have been falling for the same trick of Satan ever since. Haman is a good example. He was given great power and authority. But instead of using these to glorify & serve God he used them to advance his own wealth & influence. And Haman's opposition to God would also be applied to God's people.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- Xerxes' investing of so much power and authority in just one person was not a good leadership move. We wonder how much Haman's abuse of his position could have been anticipated!
- For Mordecai to submit to Haman's demands would have been an open denial of his allegiance to God first.
- The Jewish people, with their belief in a God of absolute truth before whom we all must one day stand accountable, must have always been a thorn in Haman's side. With careful political manoeuvring he now had the opportunity to remove this thorn.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- The Hamans of the world will always look for ways to silence the Mordecais. Are we serious enough about being salt & light?

**DAY 7** *When leaders fail to lead*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 3:7-15

**THE POINT** "The city of Susa was bewildered." They could see no reason why a whole race of people should be killed simply because they belonged to that race. Ethnic cleansing never makes sense. And why didn't Xerxes smell a rat when Haman offered the 350 tonnes of silver as a 'gift' to support his reasoning that it was in the national interests? Xerxes was not a good leader.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- Verse 7 gives the background details of the purpose of the book of Esther – the institution of the Feast of Purim (Lots).
- Haman's report to the king about the Jews was very biased and selective. Their different custom was that they worshipped the one true God; the king's laws they didn't obey came to one – the one Haman introduced about honouring him (not the king); and the only evidence Haman had concerned only one Jew, Mordecai. We need to be very alert to selective reporting today.
- Xerxes giving Haman his signing ring was not good leadership.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Could you be accused of having customs different from others?
- What dangers do we face today because of media bias and selective reporting? How can we keep better informed?

**DAY 8** *A time to be silent, a time to speak*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 4:1-8

**THE POINT** There are times when the evil schemes of ungodly men must be exposed for what they are. This was such a time.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- Mordecai lost no time in bringing his grief into public view. Haman had turned a private squabble into a national catastrophe and Mordecai wanted everyone to know how he felt.
- Xerxes' rule of disallowing expressions of grief near the palace seems consistent with his emphasis on appearances & personal image rather than on truth & substance in his leadership style.
- The Jewish people's widespread spontaneous response in grief was proof of Mordecai's influence as a leader among them.
- Queen Esther had been kept in the dark about Haman's whole wicked plan. (Was Xerxes a bit embarrassed about how he was being manipulated?) But Mordecai exposed it all publicly, including the matter of Haman's offer of a substantial 'gift'.
- This was to be Esther's hour of decision.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Are we as Christians a bit slow in our culture to bring out into the public arena issues that concern us? Are we afraid because we are only a minority voice? Are we sometimes too fatalistic?

**DAY 9** *For such a time as this?*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 4:9-17

**THE POINT** Here we come to the heart of what made Esther & Mordecai such great leadership models – their unflinching trust in God’s ability to save, and their humble & total submission to him.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- Esther knew that to try to initiate a meeting with the king under the present circumstances was a virtual suicide mission.
- Haman, unwittingly, had included the Queen on his death list!
- Esther & Mordecai both believed firmly in the absolute sovereignty of God over all human history and circumstances.
- Esther & Mordecai both believed firmly in the responsibility God places on men to exercise their will and do what is right.
- Their commitment to fasting was an expression of their contrition & the humbling of themselves before God in seeking his help.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Mordecai’s message to Esther (13-14) & her reply (15-16) are very helpful statements of how the Bible balances God’s absolute sovereignty with man’s undiminished responsibility. Have you found this balance in your own thinking? Is it inconsistent to trust God to save and yet to call on everyone to fast?
- Do you humble yourself before God if you are unjustly treated?

**DAY 10** *A welcome smile*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 5:1-8

**THE POINT** The story of Esther was intended to be read dramatically by and to future generations of Jews to remind them of how God rescued them from their enemy Haman in about 480 BC. The suspense in this section serves this purpose extremely well.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- In spite of Mordecai’s warning that Esther’s life was doomed if she did nothing, her action in approaching the king without the necessary invitation showed great courage and faith.
- The king’s (typically over-)generous offer showed that he was currently well-disposed towards her, which would have encouraged her to pursue her plan.
- Esther knew Xerxes & Haman well enough to know suspense and patient, prolonged feasting would serve her purposes best.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- What was going on in Esther’s mind as she approached the king? What emotions would she have felt as she saw him smile and raise the gold sceptre? What does it mean to you to know that a holy God accepts you because of what Jesus has done?
- How do you deal with the suspense God introduces into your life circumstances? Is your faith strengthened as you trust him?

**DAY 11** *The noose is ready... for whom?*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 5:9-14

**THE POINT** Haman is a typical example of the wicked man in Psalm 1. Mordecai is the righteous man. The Bible is about the ongoing clash between these two types. Haman is such a pitiful figure. When we read these verses knowing how the story ends it brings to mind all those parts of Scripture that warn us about pride coming before a fall. It was Haman’s feeling of self-importance, and his desire for others to share his opinion about himself, that makes his ultimate downfall so sad, and yet appropriate.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- Haman had everything he wanted – except Mordecai’s respect.
- Haman’s only real topic of conversation was Haman.
- Poor Haman was too conceited to suspect that his exclusive invitation to Esther’s party might, in fact, be his death warrant!
- Haman & Co’s plan to have Mordecai hanged before the next banquet seemed an excellent solution. But God had other ideas!

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Who was the truly happy man, Haman with all his wealth and influence – or Mordecai with his struggles and his God?
- What does this passage show us about the utter foolishness of continuing to oppose God & thinking we can get away with it?

**DAY 12** *How the mighty are fallen*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 6:1-14

**THE POINT** What (or Who) kept Xerxes awake that night? What (or Who) made him want to read history of all things? There are many contributing factors – the anticipation of Round 2 of Esther’s party with the promise of a surprise; reflection on how blessed his life and rule had been; thinking about what a good man he had in Haman, so confident, a man of action; etc, etc. But the inescapable fact is that the events are beyond mere chance coincidence. God was working out his sovereign purposes for his glory and the salvation of his people with perfect precision and timing. The Hamans of this world are no match for Almighty God.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- The ironies in this chapter give us a wonderful view of God:-
- Sleepless Xerxes reads exactly the right historical record;
  - Scheming Haman arrives at the palace early to arrange Mordecai’s hanging before Round 2 of the party and thus becomes the one forced to preside over the honouring of his enemy;
  - Haman has a clear plan for the future of himself & Mordecai; so does God, but it is exactly the reverse. Is this what Jesus meant when he said, ‘The first shall be last and the last first’?

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Are you seeking glory for yourself, or humbly waiting on God?

**DAY 13** *Hoist with his own petard*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 7:1-10

**THE POINT** It is a consistent feature of Satan’s MO that he is never satisfied with partial ‘triumphs’. Had Haman been just a bit upset with the Jews and arranged for some limited punishment he might have got away with it (cf verse 4b). But Haman was his own worst enemy, as shown by his final unfortunate little episode with Esther on the couch. Be encouraged, read Psalm 37.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- Esther would have been greatly strengthened & encouraged by the events of the day. They would have been God’s sure seal of approval on every part of the plan to this point. Haman on the other hand would not be feeling his normal confident self!
- Esther presented her case with the greatest dramatic effect. Her trust in God’s sovereignty did not lessen her own hard work.
- God’s sense of justice is clearly demonstrated in the fact that Haman was finally hanged publicly on the high gallows he himself had prepared for Mordecai.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- What encouraging signs has God been giving you in the things you are seeking to do for him? Do they help you to press on?
- Does Haman’s fate help you persevere in times of persecution?

**DAY 14** *The steps of a good man...*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 8:1-10

**THE POINT** Although the switch between Haman & Mordecai was now 100% complete, the Jewish people remained in danger because the decree for their annihilation could not be revoked – it was ‘the law of the Medes & Persians’ (see verse 8, 1:19, Daniel 6:15). Esther again took the risk of presenting herself to the king and again by God’s grace he raised the gold sceptre. The only solution was a ‘counter decree’, which we’ll look at tomorrow.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- Esther & Mordecai inherited everything that had belonged to Haman; Haman suffered the fate that had been marked out for them and all God’s people. There is here a partial OT picture of substitutionary atonement: Christ was hung on the gallows built for us, and we have inherited all the riches of heaven.
- Esther risked her life again for her people; the Queen’s heart is still with the ‘shareholders’. What a fine model of leadership!
- Xerxes is at last starting to see the true picture – and acts.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Although they had to go through deep waters of testing, Esther’s & Mordecai’s unflinching faith & trust in God resulted in blessing & honour. Are you going through a time of testing at present? Sing hymn 548 in *Rejoice!* (based on Psalm 37).

**DAY 15** *The aroma of Christ*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 8:11-17

**THE POINT** The 1st edict (which was irrevocable) encouraged the people of every nation, on the appointed day, to annihilate the Jews totally as a race. The second edict (also irrevocable) encouraged the Jews to avenge themselves against anyone who took up the option of the first edict. Word soon spread throughout the kingdom that anyone fighting the Jews was fighting their God (see verse 17b). It wasn't hard to work out the wisest option!

**THE PARTICULARS**

- The 2nd edict only gave the Jews the right to self defence; it did not allow them to make the first move in any situation.
- Only one day was allowed for the edicts to apply, otherwise there would be constant uncertainty and instability.
- The 2nd edict gave grounds for great rejoicing among the Jews.
- The dispersion of the Jews among the nations, and the clear evidence that God was with them, had a two-fold effect: for those opposed to God's rule in his world it produced hatred and antagonism; for those willing to look at the evidence, conversion.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- The Church dispersed throughout the world today is in a similar position to the Jews in OT times (see 2 Corinthians 2:14-17). Are we living in such a way as to draw others to the Saviour?

**DAY 16** *I will build my Church*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 9:1-10

**THE POINT** In spite of God's clear message to the world through the events of the previous 9 months, there were still those who chose the foolish option on the 1st edict. As promised, God took this opportunity to give a resounding victory to his people. This does raise some ethical issues for us in the light of NT teaching about forgiving & loving our enemies but we need to remember we are dealing with the issue of God saving his people as a body and not with personal vendettas. It is about God's ultimate dealing with those who continue to resist his rightful rule in their life in the face of his overtures of grace to all who seek him.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- In the face of all the evidence there were still many who thought they could defy the living God and win. Sadly, the same foolishness exists in the hearts of men today.
- Mordecai's consistent witness as salt & light over many years led many in high places to acknowledge the one true God. God used his leadership qualities in an extensive & powerful way.
- The Jews did not take the plunder in spite of the edict's consent.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- In the light of this passage, should we be more earnest & bold in prayer for the safety, vindication & growth of God's Church?

**DAY 17** *An ethical dilemma*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 9:11-17

**THE POINT** The ethical issues raised yesterday become even more pronounced in this next passage. The 2 edicts were clearly intended to make the whole matter a short, 'let's-get-it-over-and-done-with' affair, with no ongoing reprisals. Why Esther would want an extension of an extra day in the light of the success of the campaign from the Jewish point of view is not explained. The people of God had shown great restraint in not accepting any plunder, so why this taste for blood? Perhaps the only point we can make is that the enemies of the Jews in the capital are the ones who should have best seen the need to wave the white flag at the beginning of the first day and thus save any bloodshed at all.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- A special example had to be made of Haman's 10 sons to highlight publicly the end of a possible evil 'dynasty' (presumably it was their dead bodies that were hung out on the gallows).
- Perhaps the 3-fold mention of the rejection of plunder (10, 15, 16) was to emphasise their avoidance of the sin of Saul (1 Sam. 15:10-23) that had incurred God's wrath over 500 yrs earlier.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Think of some of the parts of the world where many suffer due to racial pay-back. Does it achieve anything? Pray for them.

**DAY 18** *When sorrow turned to joy*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 9:18-28

**THE POINT** Purim (Feb/Mar) is one of the only two Jewish Festivals that have no institutional authority in the Law of Moses. The other is Hannukah (Dec/Christmas). The book of Esther is the only record we have of Purim's origin & purpose so here we are given a summary of these and the reasons for the obligation on the Jews to celebrate the event every year.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- There was a sound historic reason for the rural and urban communities to hold the celebration on consecutive days.
- The celebration was to involve the sharing of food and the giving of gifts to the poor.
- "... the Jews took it upon themselves ..." (27) gives justification for the festival in spite of its absence from the Mosaic Law.
- The Festival of Purim was to be held every year without fail.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- When was the last time God turned your sorrow into joy as an individual? ... as a family? ... as a Church? How can we celebrate things like this in a meaningful and helpful way?
- Why is God so keen that we should remember his great acts on behalf of his Church (cf Psalm 78:1-8)?

**DAY 19** *Onward Christian soldiers*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 9:29-32

**THE POINT** We saw yesterday how important it was that the post-exilic Jews remembered to celebrate Purim in spite of the fact that it wasn't part of the Mosaic Law. It was the strong leadership given by Mordecai and Esther that was the human vehicle the sovereign Lord used to rescue his people. That strong leadership is seen again in the lengths to which they went to ensure that these amazing events were not lost to future generations of Jews. Because of the nature of this celebration there is no NT equivalent for the Christian Church, but it is good if we are encouraged by this story to look back on times when God has raised up leaders to rescue his Church from the hands of those who attack it.

**THE PARTICULARS**

- The authority vested in Esther and Mordecai to write these letters and to "establish the days of Purim at their designated times" came from the godly leadership they had given at a time of great national need and from the honour God had bestowed upon them in raising them to positions of influence and power.

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- There are parts of the world today where our brothers and sisters in Christ are under threat of annihilation from Islam and other religions. Pray that God will raise up strong leaders through whom he will give victory to his people. Read Psalm 2.

**DAY 20** *Salt and light*

**THE PASSAGE** ESTHER 10:1-3

**THE POINT** This final little commendation given to Mordecai again serves to highlight the stark contrast between him and his predecessor, Haman. Mordecai rose to this position through honesty and integrity. He used the position only for the protection and welfare of others, "especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (cf Galatians 6:10).

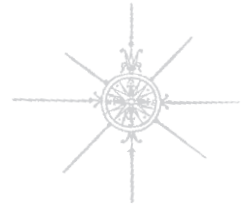
**THE PARTICULARS**

- As he had done with Joseph in Egypt, God raised Mordecai the Jew to second in power to the King himself in a foreign land.
- Mordecai was held in high esteem and was recognised for his concern for others. Leaders today would do well to note this!

**TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY**

- Throughout the book of Esther there is no explicit mention of God, nor are any of his names used. There is no mention of prayer or of calling out to God for help. Yet it is clearly God's sovereign power that has been the basis of the people's faith and that has saved them because they are his people. How does the watching world see us as a Church today? Is it clear we are God's people, following his ways and trusting in his strength, even when we are not talking about him explicitly?
- Pray for godly leaders in government, industry, commerce, etc.





# Come worship with us!

*If you are passing through or moving nearby, feel free to ring the Minister, Clerk or Elder.*

## australian capital territory

### CANBERRA, BELCONNEN

Cnr Gatty St. & Ross Smith Cres, Scullin.  
Sunday Service 10:00 am  
Elder: Mr R Howe (02) 6247 9586

### CANBERRA, FORREST (St Andrew's)

1 State Circle (opp Parliament House).  
Service Times: 9.30am. & 7.00pm.

Church Office: (02) 6295 3457

### CANBERRA, TUGGERANONG

Isabella Plains: Isabella Plains Primary School,  
Ellerstone Ave. Worship Service & Sunday  
School 10.00am.  
Rev Tim Abbey (02) 6292 6772

## new south wales

### ANNANDALE

Hunter Baillie, Johnston & Collins Sts.  
10.00am, 6.30pm. 2nd & 4th Sunday.  
S.Clerk. Mr M. Beveridge (02) 9969 8071.  
I.M. Rev. A. Van Ash (02) 9817 0587.  
**Welsh Church:** Chalmers St, Surry Hills.  
3.00pm. each Sunday.

### ARMIDALE

Faulkner St, 9.30am. & 7.00pm.  
Rev. Richard O'Brien (02) 6772 3093

### ASHFIELD

Liverpool Rd. & Knox St.  
Rev Peter Hastie (02) 9798 6572.

### BEACON HILL-NARRAWEENA

244 Warringah Rd. 9.30am. & 7.00pm.  
Rev. Andrew Clausen (02) 9521 2361.

### BEECROFT

Mary St., 8.45am. 10.30am. & 6.30pm.  
Rev Martin Levine (02) 9876 2478.

### BEGA — EDEN

Bega -Upper St; Eden — CWA Rooms,  
Imlay St. Clerk: Mrs J Gill (02) 6495 6062

### BLACKTOWN (EAST)

Gallop Grv. & Heffron Rd. Lalor Park,  
Service Times: 10.30am. & 6.00pm.  
S.Clerk: Mr B. Clark (02) 9624 5027.

### BONDI

Cnr. Castlefield & Miller Sts.  
10.00am & 7.00pm.  
Rev John Graham: (02) 9597 5214

### BONNYRIGG

Western Regions Chinese Church  
14-16 Bibbys Place. 9.30 am. (English) &  
11.00 am. (Mandarin)

S.Clerk: Stanley Chen (02) 9753 2073

### BOWRAL — MITTAGONG

**Bowral:** 20 Bendooley St. 10.30am.

Kid's Church: 9.30 am. 1st & 3rd Sunday  
**Mittagong:** Cr Alice & Edwards Sts. 9.00am.  
Rev. Doug McPherson: (02) 4872 4052.

### BURWOOD

46-48 Belmore St. 9.15am (English)  
Session Clerk (02) 9745 3935

### Burwood:

11.00 am (Cantonese)  
Rev. Dennis Law (02) 9715 3889  
5.00 pm (English).

Rev Eugene Hor (02) 9715 3889.

### CAMPBELLTOWN

34 Lithgow St. 8.30 am. 10.00 am. 6.30 pm.

### CARINGBAH

393 Port Hacking Rd.  
Rev Graham Flick (02) 9524 6406 (O).

### CASTLE HILL

247 Old Northern Rd. 9.30am. & 6.00pm.  
Rev Dr Ron Keith (02) 9634 2911.

### CHATSWOOD

St Andrew's, Anderson St.  
9.00am.& 7.00 pm.

**Lane Cove, St James, Farran St.** 11.00am.

Rev. Jeff Read (02) 9419 5932 (W) 2077 (H)

### CHERRYBROOK

John Purchase Public School Hall, Purchase  
Road, Cherrybrook 9.30 am  
Rev John Irvin (Minister) (02) 9875 4894

### CHINESE CHURCH

Cnr Crown & Albion Sts. Surry Hills.  
English/Cantonese/Mandarin/Bilingual  
Services. Office (02) 9331 4459.

Rev Joe Mock (02) 9642 8861(H).

Rev Daniel Ng (02) 9797 2342(H).

Rev Ezra Tseng (02) 9500 1259(H).

### COFFS HARBOUR (St Andrew's)

187 High St. 8.00am. 9.45am. & 6.30pm.  
Rev Peter Moore (02) 6652 3183(O).

### CONCORD

Cornerstone Community Presbyterian Church  
Meets Concord Public School 9.30 am.

Cnr Burwood Rd. & Stanley St. Concord

Rev. C S Tang (02) 9688 7880 (H)

### COOTAMUNDRA (Scots)

Cnr Parker & Francis Sts 11.00 am.  
I.M. Rev F. Monckton (02) 6977 1642

### COWRA

46 Macquarie St. Also Gooloogong,  
Morongla.

Rev John McClean Ph (02) 6342 1467.

### CRONULLA

13 Croydon St. 9.30am.

Rev. Russell Stark (02) 9523 5875.

### EAST MAITLAND

George St. **Beresfield:** Beresford Ave.

**Raymond Terrace:** Irrawang St.

Rev Donald Smith (02) 4933 7443.

### EPPING

Bridge & Rawson Sts.  
Rev David Tsai (02) 9876 1188.

### FORSTER/TUNCURRY

Bruce St. Forster, 9.30am.  
Rev. John Thompson (02) 6552 1082

### GILGANDRA (St Stephens)

14 Myrtle St. 11.00am. & 9.00am. (4th Sun).  
Rev. Tony Adams (02) 6847 2036

### GOSFORD

14-16 Young St. West Gosford. 8.00am.  
9.45am. 6.30 pm. Office: Ph (02) 4323 2490.  
Rev Rod Mallinson (02) 4385 5231.

### GRIFFITH

Opp. Collina Oval, Blumer Ave. 9.30 am.  
Rev. Peter Gobbo (02) 6962 4827.  
Dr L. Thorpe (02) 6962 1934

### GUNNEDAH

Marquis & Barber Sts. **Boggabri:** Court  
House Rev. Stefan Slucki (02) 6742 0551

### HURSTVILLE

Cnr. Park Rd. & McMahan St. English:  
9.30am. & 6.30pm. Indonesian: 4.00pm.  
Rev Kevin Murray (02) 9153 8176.

### KIAMA

Terralong St. 9.00am & 5.30pm.  
Pastor: Noel Creighton (02) 4233 1554

### KOGARAH

Cnr Kensington & Derby Sts.  
9.30am. & 7.00pm.

Rev Ray Osborn (02) 9587 5577.

### KOREAN, SYDNEY (Young Nak)

7-9 Manson St, Telopea. 9.30am. 11.00am.  
3.00pm. S.Clerk (02) 9816 3807

### LEETON

Cnr. Sycamore & Cypress Sts. 10.00 am.  
Rev. Richard Keith (02) 4272 9407

### LISMORE (St Paul's)

188 Keen St. 9.00 am. & 7.00 pm.  
Rev Peter Playsted (02) 6624 7050

### MACQUARIE

Herring & Abuklea Rds, Marsfield  
Rev. Rex Swawley (02) 9878 4202

### MANLY (St Andrew's)

Raglan St. & Augusta Lane. 9.45am.  
Quarterly (Communion) 5.30pm.  
Rev. Derek Bullen (02) 9976 2801

### MAROUBRA, Kingsford

8 Robey St, **Maroubra.** 9.30 am. 7.15 pm.  
94 Houston Rd, **Kingsford** 11.15am

Chinese Service, **Maroubra** 4 pm.

Rev Johnnie Li (02) 9349 1312

### MOREE (St Andrew's)

Cnr Albert & Auburn Sts, 10.00am.  
Rev. L. Fowler (02) 6752 1083

### MOSMAN (Scots Kirk)

Belmont Rd. (nr Military Rd), 9.00am.  
Rev R J McCracken (02) 9969 6101.

**MURWILLUMBAH** (St Andrew's)  
Wollumbin St. 9.00am. & 7.00pm.  
**Tyalgum:** 11.00am. (3rd Sun).  
Rev. Philip Strong (02) 6672 1088

**NEWCASTLE** (St Andrews)  
Cnr. Laman & Auckland Sts 9.15am & 7.00pm.  
Office: (02) 4929 2857

**NORTH SYDNEY-GREENWICH**  
(St Peter's) 234 Blues Point Rd. 10.00am.  
& 6.45pm. Wednesday 1.15pm.  
**Greenwich:** (Taylor's Memorial)  
86A Greenwich Rd. 10.00am.  
Rev Dr Paul Logan (02) 9955 1662.  
Assistant Rev A B Clark (02) 9638 7471

**ORANGE (St James)**  
Cnr Anson St. & Matthews Ave. 10.00am.  
Rev. William Stewart (02) 6362 6304

**PARRAMATTA CITY**  
Cumberland High School, Dunmore Ave.  
Carlingford. Rev. Luke Tattersall.  
S. Clerk: Mike Whiteman (02) 9484 1240.

**PENRITH** (St Andrew's)  
Doonmore St. near High St, 9.00am. &  
7.00pm. Rev William Morrow (02) 4721 2440.

**PORT MACQUARIE** (St Andrew's)  
Cnr William/Munster Sts, 9.00am., 10.30am  
Rev S Donnellan (02) 6582 2505

**RANDWICK**  
Alison Rd. & Cook St. 10.00am. & 5.00pm.  
Rev. Grant Thorpe (02) 9399 3183.

**ROSE BAY** (St Andrew's)  
Cnr Dover Rd. & Carlisle St. 10.00am & 6.00pm.  
Rev Bruce Christian (02) 9388 1206(O).

**RYDE**  
Bowden & Squire Sts.  
**Putney:** Douglas St.  
Rev Andrew Unwin (02) 9809 3197.

**SOUTHERN CROSS**  
Park Ave. East Lismore  
Rev. Stephen Cree (02) 6621 3655

**SPRINGWOOD**  
160 Macquarie Rd. 10.30am. & 6.00pm.  
**Winnalee :** 481 Hawkesbury Rd. 9.00am.  
(02) 4751 1188(O).  
Rev. Robert Benn (02) 4751 9968

**STRATHFIELD** (St David's)  
Barker Rd. & Marion St. 10.00am. & 6.30pm.  
Rev Robert McKean (02) 9746 8123.

**SUTHERLAND**  
Cnr Flora & Glencoe Sts. 9.30am & 5.30pm  
Rev Adrian Clausen (02) 9521 2361

**SYDNEY (Scots Church)**  
St Patrick's Hall, 20 Grosvenor St. (tempo-  
rary). Service Time: 10.30 am.  
Rev. Adrian Van Ash (02) 9817 0587.

**TAMWORTH** (St Stephen's)  
23 Matthews St, also at **Moonbi**.  
9.00am. & 6.30pm  
Rev Stuart Andrews (02) 6765 8754.

**Tamworth Community Presb Church,**  
Oxley High School Piper St Nth T'worth  
10 am. Rev Keith Walker (02) 6762 5759

**Manilla:** Court St.  
Rev. Vic Johnson (02) 6785 1627.

**TAREE**  
Albert St. 9.00am.  
Rev John Thompson (02) 6552 1082(O).

**TENTERFIELD**  
117 Logan St. (07) 6977 1642

**TERRIGAL** (Scots Kirk)  
2 Willoughby Rd.

Rev Phillip Paul (02) 4385 2240.

**WAHROONGA**  
Wahroonga Presbyterian Church,  
Cnr. Illoura Ave. & Stuart St. 9.30am.  
Rev. Murray Fraser (02) 9489 3690

**WEE WAA**  
Mitchell St. Mr Mark Powell (02) 6795 4259

**WENTWORTH FALLS** (St Andrew's)  
Falls Rd. 9.00 am. Session Clerk: Mr Bernie  
Tucker (02) 4757 3518

**WENTWORTHVILLE**  
7 McKem St. **Girraween:** 15 Tungarra Rd.  
Rev. David Griffin Phone: (02) 9896 3297.

**WESTLAKES**  
Warnervale Community Hall, Warnervale Rd  
S.School 8.30 am. Service 9.30 am.  
Rev. Esa Hukkinen (02) 4393 5530

**WEST WYALONG**  
Pioneer Memorial, Court St. 9.00am. &  
11.00am. Also at **Barmedman, Mahda,**  
**Talimba & Weethalle.**  
Mr. Lance Jackson (02) 6972 2143.

**WOLLONGONG** (St Andrew's)  
Cnr Kembla & Burelli Sts. 9.45am. &  
6.00pm. Rev Bruce Hammonds  
(02) 4271 1545(H) (02) 4226 1725(O).

**WOOLGOOLGA**  
Cnr Scarborough St. & Landrigan Cl.  
9.00am. Rev. Peter Moore (02) 6651 2301.

**WOONONA**  
7 Gray St. Rev Peter Currie (02) 4284 4057.

**WOY WOY**  
120 Blackwall Rd. 9.00 & 10.30 am.  
Rev. Jamie Newans (02) 4342 2856

*queensland*

**ACACIA RIDGE**  
Cnr. Mortimer & Beaudesert Rds.  
8.45am. & 6.00pm. Pastor Stephen Teale,  
(07) 3277 0010, (07) 3344 5022 (H).

**ASCOT**  
68 Charlton St. (Near Airport).  
**Nundah:** 14 Rode Rd  
Rev Guido Kettniss (07) 3216 4151.  
Rev Les Hall (07) 3267 0558

**ATHERTON**  
Cnr. Alice & Jack Sts. 10.00am & 6.00pm.  
Rev. John Trappett (07) 4091 1375.

**BALD HILLS**  
58 Strathpine Rd. 8.30am. & 7.00pm.  
Rev Peter Bloomfield (07) 3261 4305.

**BRISBANE KOREAN**  
145 Ann St. 8.00am. 12.00 noon, 7.30pm.  
Rev Dr M. M. Y. Kim (07) 3300 3132

**BRISBANE** (St Paul's)  
53 St Pauls Tce. Spring Hill.  
Rev A. Gardiner (07) 3831 7458(O).

**BUNDABERG** (Scots')  
Cnr. Water & Alice Sts. 9.00am & 7.00pm.  
Rev David Newman (07) 4153 2954

**CABOOLTURE**  
24 Cottrill Road. 9.00am & 6.00pm.  
Rev. G. Watt (07) 5494 1181

**CAIRNS**  
85 Sheridan St. 9.15 am. & 6.30 pm.  
Rev Donald Broadwater, (07) 4036 0421(H).  
Rev Russell van Delden, (07) 4054 3241 (H).

**CALLIDE VALLEY**  
**Biloela:** Cnr. Kariboe & Melton Sts.  
10.00am. & 6.00pm.  
**Jambin:** Three Ways 8.30am.  
Pastor Walter Posthuma (07) 4992 1441

**CALOUNDRA**  
Cnr Kalinga & Ormutz Sts. 9.30am. &  
7.00pm. Rev N. Thomason (07) 5493 3594

**CAPALABA**  
74 Lyndon Rd. 8.30am  
Rev B Enchelmaier (07) 3824 0958

**CHARLEVILLE/BLACKALL**  
78 Galatea St. 9.00am.  
Pastor Alan Grant (07) 4654 3100.

**CHARTERSTOWERS**  
Blackthorn Hall, Thornburgh College,  
King St. Mr. S. McDonald (07) 4787 3395

**CLAYFIELD** (Scots Memorial)  
29 Bellevue Terrace, 9.30am.  
I.M. Rev. Robert Herrgott (07) 3300 6158

**CLEVELAND**  
Cnr Bloomfield & Ocean Sts.  
10.15am & 6.30pm.  
Rev Brian Enchelmaier (07) 3824 0958

**COORPAROO**  
Emlyn St. 10.00am. & 7.00pm.  
I.M. Rev D. Mihailovic (07) 3800 3799

**CREEK ROAD**  
PCYC Centre, 27 Narracott St., Carina  
9.00 am & 5.30 pm.  
Rev Peter Barson (07) 3398 3607.  
Rev D. McDougall (07) 3397 5244.

**DALBY**  
Condamine St. (cnr. Patrick St).  
Rev Roland Lowther (07) 4669 7074

**EUMUNDI**  
Memorial Drive, 10.45am. (weekly) &  
6.30pm. (2nd & 4th Sunday).  
I.M. Rev. Noel C. Thomason (07) 5493 3594

**GAYNDAH**  
Warton St. 10.00am.  
I.M. Rev. Noel C. Thomason (07) 5493 3594

**GLADSTONE** (St Andrew's)  
Goondoon & Bramston Sts. 10.00am. &  
7.00pm. **Benaraby:** O'Connor Rd. 8.00am.  
Also **Calliope.**  
Rev. David Secomb (07) 4972 1058

**GOLD COAST (I)**  
**Arundel:** 132 Allied Drive 9.15am.  
I.M. Rev. John Morrow (07) 5571 5676  
**Robina:** Cnr University & Cottesloe Drives  
10.00 am. & 6.30 pm.  
Rev. Kevin Ridley (07) 5571 1416

**GOLD COAST (II)**  
**Mudgeeraba:** Cnr Mudgeeraba Rd &  
Regency Pde. 9.00am. & 6.30 pm.  
Rev. Glenn Samuel (07) 5530 7003

**Mudgeeraba Korean Congregation:**  
11.30 am. Rev. Jo Kim (07) 5574 4001

**Palm Beach/Elanora:** 'The Meeting Place'  
Cnr. Coolgardie & Guineas Creek Rds. (cnr.  
Pines Shopping Ctre) 9.00 am.  
Rev. Glenn Samuel (07) 5530 7003

**GYMPIE**  
11 Crown St. 9.30am. Woolooga 11.00am.  
Rev. D Cranney (07) 5482 7629(O).

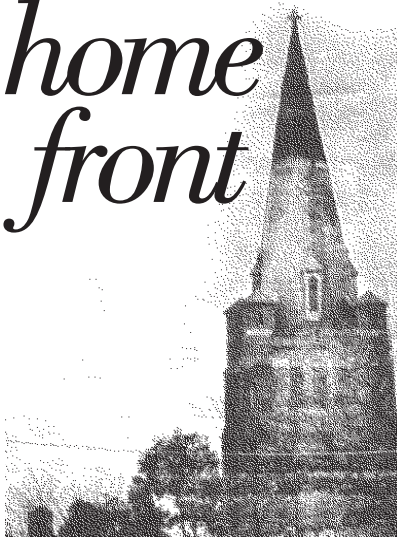
**HERVEY BAY** (St David's)  
Denmans Rd, Scarness, 9.30am. & 7.00pm.  
Rev. John T Roth (07) 4124 7018.

**IPSWICH**  
Cnr Limestone & Gordon Sts. 8.20am.





# home front



## PCQ rally

About 1200 people attended the Presbyterian Church of Queensland's annual celebration rally on Sunday 23 June. Highlights included the Korean Choir, spectacular in national dress, and HiYa Power. Musicians from the Dalby and Mitchelton churches led the praise. The evening program, led by Rev. Russell van Delden, featured Nathan Stewart and Jasmine Davies (CTA), with a video of street interviews asking what's wrong

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with the world, and a message from Luke Tattersall.

## A growing concern

The PCQ's 2002 assembly opened on 24 June with a seminar on *The ABC's of Natural Church Growth*. In the evening, the new Moderator, **Rt Rev. Ian McIver**, was inducted. The annual world evangelisation barbecue on Tuesday night gave commissioners and visitors an opportunity to hear from some of the missionaries.

The assembly resolved to employ a further staff member of the **Christian Education Department**, and approved funding to extend the ministry of **Deaconess Dianne Yates** to those in aged care facilities. **Mrs Ann Whyte** addressed the assembly on the Outback. Provision was made for an ad hoc committee to investigate the relocation of church offices, PresCare and the Reformed College of Ministries with findings to be presented to the 2003 Assembly. **Rev. Peter Richardson**, lecturer at the Reformed College of Ministries, was voted Moderator Elect.

## Milestones in service

**Penrith** elder **John Shaw** has celebrated 40 years on the session, having been inducted on 28 August 1962. Now elder emeritus, he is still an active member, reports session clerk A. R. Roberts. Elder **H.K. (Toby) Phillips** retired from active session work at the end of April after 37 years of service to the congregation, and is now allocating his time to other areas of service within the church.

## Missionary ordained

The Presbytery of Sydney licensed and ordained **Mr Bagoes Seta** in the Burwood church on 19 July, and commissioned him as an associate missionary with APWM. The Moderator, **Rev. Bruce Christian**, led the worship, and **Rev. Paul Cooper** gave the charge. Mr Seta flew to Indonesia the next day to take up his position there. No contact details for him are available yet.

**Rev Jim Elliott** has been inducted into the Charge of **Campbelltown** (NSW), and his new details are: 11 Kapala Avenue, Bradbury, NSW, 2560; phone (02) 4625 1037.

**Mr Stephen Fletcher** was ordained and inducted elder to the **Tweed Heads** (NSW) session on 10 February.

## Robert Young

May 1911 - April 2002

**R**obert Young, former session clerk at Wynnum Presbyterian Church (Qld), was called home to be with his Lord whom he had served so faithfully, on 19 April.

Born in Brisbane, he came to Wynnum aged two, and spent his working life serving the one employer, Evans, Andersen & Phelan. He married Thelma Allison at the Park Presbyterian Church, Brisbane, in 1945.

Bob's life was completely centred on the work of the Presbyterian Church at Wynnum, and he had the privilege and blessing of worshipping under every minister who had served in the charge since it was raised to sanctioned status.

He was received into membership in August 1929 and ordained an elder in November 1945. He served as session clerk from 1958 until his retirement in 1992. His life was a happy and blessed one, and all at Wynnum Presbyterian Church give thanks to God for it, and for the service and guidance which Bob gave in this corner of his vineyard. Bob is survived by his wife, Thelma.

*Greg Newnham  
Wynnum session clerk*

## NSW assembly

The 2002 assembly of the PCNSW elected **Rt Rev John Irvin**, minister at **Cherrybrook**, as Moderator, appointed **John McClean**, minister at **Cowra Presbyterian Church** lecturer in systematic theology at the **Presbyterian Theological Centre** from 1 January, and approved increases in stipends and allowances from the same date. Thirteen new ministers inducted or appointed since the last assembly were welcomed.

The assembly encouraged **Presbyterian Social Services** to complete a comprehensive register of qualified chaplains/pastoral care workers, who represent the Presbyterian Church in NSW, posting it on their web site.

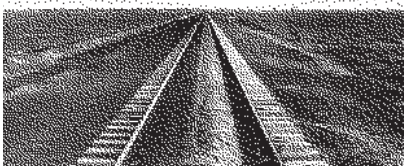
It also instructed the November

Commission of Assembly to deal with all matters related to the policy for dealing with alleged sexual abuse within the church as outlined in *Breaking the Silence* and Memorandum of Understanding.

## Market Day

This year's **Presbyterian Market Day** is at the Chatswood Town Hall on Wednesday 2 October, 9am to 3pm. All proceeds will go to **Child and Family Services** and will provide much needed support for the Presbyterian children's homes. These homes are Kyle Williams at Blakehurst for children aged 8 to 13; New Anchor at Jannali for children 12 to 16; and Corner Stone at Fairfield for children 14 to 18. Each home caters for six children although eight is often the norm. For more information, phone (02) 9398 4847 or (02) 9427 2574.

# across australia



## Stem cell controversy

The Australian Family Association has prepared a computer disk with information on embryonic stem cells arguments for opposing using embryos for medical research, and 200 different letters

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designed to be sent to federal MPs, reports *Jeanette McHardy* of Essendon Presbyterian Church, Melbourne.

All church members have to do is sign the letter, put their name and address on it, and address the envelope provided. The AFA is requesting the support from the churches in this endeavour. The AFA provides the disk, the minister prints the required amount of letters, and session provides the envelopes and stamps to complete the project.

To get the CD, contact Desmond Kenneally, 2/31 George St, Niddrie, Vic 3042; phone 03 9337 6611; mob: 0401 928305; fax: 03 93282877.

## Youth homelessness rising

A youth homelessness census of 1930 state and Catholic schools and Supported Assistance Accommodation Program (SAAP) services across Australia, by **Chris Chamberlain** and **David MacKenzie** of RMIT University, Melbourne, shows that 8.4 per cent more youth aged 12-18 are homeless today than seven years ago when the last youth census was conducted.

The report shows a number of alarming statistics: Nationally, 26,060 youths aged 12-18 are homeless; 55 per cent of homeless youths are girls; and only 41 per cent of homeless youths remain within the education system.

The rate of youth homelessness varies greatly, ranging from 10 homeless per 1000 youths in NSW and Victoria, up to 69 per 1000 in the Northern Territory. For

a full copy of the report, and The Salvation Army's response and recommendations, contact <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/reports>

## Editor's new life

**Rev. Ross Prout**, managing editor of *New Life* Christian newspaper since 1995, will be leaving the paper at the end of the year. He and his wife Bronwyn have accepted a call to the pastoral ministry at the **Ulverstone Baptist Church** in Tasmania.

The board of *New Life* has received the editor's resignation with reluctance and regret. A statement said Mr Prout would be difficult to replace for he has served *New Life* and its readers faithfully and well.

## Book awards

Six Australian publishers have seven titles short-listed by the judges for the 2002 ACLS Christian Book of the Year Awards. The short-listed titles are: *Australian Stories for the Soul*, various authors, Strand Publishing; *Flynn's Outback Angels*, by Ivan Rudolph, Central Qld University Press; *If I were God, I'd end all the pain*, John Dickson, Matthias Media; *Keep Walking*, Robyn Claydon, SPCK-Australia; *Listening: a pastoral style*, Frances Moran, David Lovell Publishing; *Making Good Churches Better*, Kevin Giles, Acorn Press; and *What Some of You Were*, Christopher Keane, Matthias Media.

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# Christian Growth Day

**Saturday 5 October 2002 • 10am-3pm**

*Deuteronomy: The Commands of a Covenant God*

**REV. DR. ALLAN HARMAN**

Research Professor, Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne  
Dr. Harman is the author of many books and articles on the Old Testament and Church History. He was one of the translators of the New King James Bible. His commentary on Deuteronomy (Focus on the Bible: Christian Focus Press) has been very well received world-wide.

**"Deuteronomy in Bible History";**

**"The Message of Deuteronomy";**

**"Christ in Deuteronomy"**

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# world news



## Scotland the pagan

The June *Life and Work*, the magazine of the Church of Scotland, reports that there has been a massive decline in the Christian faith in modern Scotland. The magazine quoted researchers from the Department of Sociology at the Aberdeen University who said participation in the Kirk had dropped to unprecedented levels.

“Why have Scots given up the churches? Have they lost their faith or have they only lost faith in specific institutions? Church leaders tend to prefer the second explanation because it holds out some hope that, if the churches just change something ... then the people will return. There is scant evidence for this hope,” the researchers said.

“We asked those who had once attended regularly but then stopped if they had ever seriously considered attending again: three quarters had not ... Although most people give up at an early age, for all age cohorts there was an increase in defections in the 1990s. We are not sure what explains that, but it might be that changes the churches have made to try to reverse the decline (modernising the worship styles, ordaining women and merging congregations among other things) are alienating their core supporters without attracting new ones. There may well be a hidden danger in radical change.”

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## Nigerian persecution

Christians in central Nigeria have been killed and forced from their land by extremist Islamic militants.

Attacks have been mounted against Christians in the area surrounding Jos, leaving several dead and many more wounded and displaced.

Attacks – including burning churches and looting shops and homes – were reported in many villages and towns, and at least 1000 Christians are refugees scattered between Mban, Pil and Langtan. Christian leaders in the area have organised refugee camps and have recorded evidence of the atrocities.

*Christian Solidarity Worldwide*

## Cautious welcome

Anglicans around the world have cautiously welcomed **Archbishop Rowan Williams** as the new head of the world’s 70 million Anglicans. Dr Williams, announced as the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, was already a controversial figure. He tolerated gay priests, ordained women, criticised governments and has questioned the historic link between church and state.

Sydney Anglican Archbishop **Dr Peter Jensen** said his community would be concerned at how the Welsh intellectual leader would approach some issues.

“Anglicans will pray that ... Archbishop Williams will lead the Communion in faithful adherence to the teaching of the Scripture.”

*AAP*

## Mugabe’s schools ruling

Zimbabwean president **Robert Mugabe** has announced that the government will soon appoint senior civil servants to head all Zimbabwean private and mission schools.

But officials from private schools have rejected the planned move, saying it is unacceptable for the government to appoint school heads when it did not make any contribution to the running and upkeep of the schools.

Mugabe said the Education Act would be amended in the current session to allow for the appointment of civil servants as heads of private schools to root out what he termed as racism and sectionalism.

**Bevane Karadzandima**, education secretary for the Anglican Church, said the church would not mind its schools being led by civil servants as long as the headmasters were Anglicans or Christians.

*AllAfrica.com*

## Indonesia boosts democracy

Indonesia’s highest legislative body, after rebuffing calls to impose Islamic law in the world’s largest Muslim country, has closed its annual session with constitutional changes aimed at enhancing the democratic nature of the state.

The rejection of a proposal to introduce Islamic Shariah law came even before it was put to a vote by the 700-member **People’s Consultative Assembly**.

*New York Times*

## SUPPORT FOR MISSION STATIONS IN SANTO, VANUATU

The Australian Presbyterian World Mission has a long-standing involvement with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. The Talua Ministry Training Centre at Santo, is the Bible College of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, for which APWM provides financial support, as well as, lecturing staff to various positions over the years. In 2002, APWM is structuring a program of **intensive lecture periods** to cover the classroom needs for the year. This involves costs for five lecturers, to conduct short courses and so keep faith with our commitments.

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# A good catch

*The Net has vast resources for Christians.*

Reader Lynette Morgan emailed me recently with a helpful suggestion. "We have reviews of books, movies, videos in *AP*," says Lynette, "so why not web sites?" Lynette points out that many retirees and elderly folk are embracing Internet technology, perhaps unaware of the resources available online that can help in reading and understanding God's Word.

It's a good point. So to start the ball rolling, Lynette suggests two helpful sites. First, the Christian Classics Ethereal Library ([www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)) is a growing collection of classic Christian books in electronic format. The chief qualification for inclusion is that the works have passed into the public domain, so you'll find a selection of theological positions represented. There are literally hundreds of texts, from Thomas a Kempis to Bunyan, together with a selection of audio books in popular MP3 format.

Also in audio format – this time slightly more contemporary – Lynette recommends Chuck Swindoll's sermons, which you can download from [www.insight.org](http://www.insight.org).

Over the past few years, many computer users have found that Bible programs like Quickverse have been helpful in searching the text of Scripture. Now, with

**Phil  
Campbell**

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/>, all the tools you need are available online, and free of charge. After a short absence due to licensing issues, the full NIV text is now online, as are NASB, NKJV, and half a dozen other English translations. That's just the beginning. Translations in Italian, Nordic, Russian, Romanian, German and 18 other languages are available too, as are audio bibles and IVP commentaries for 16 New Testament books.

For a slightly more scholarly approach, <http://bible.crosswalk.com/> offers the biblical text in the original languages, complete with downloadable Greek and Hebrew fonts. Along with a huge range of other aids, Crosswalk offers the full searchable text of the works of early historian Josephus, along with works of the early Church Fathers, creeds and confessions, and the well-known *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

One site I visit daily is the Sydney Anglican Media News page, which offers regular and timely updates of world Christian news. While there's an under-

standable Anglican slant, the site offers fresh links to news of general Christian interest from around Australia and beyond. So, for example, if you want to know what Australian newspapers are saying about the ethics of stem cell research, you can easily scan back through a month of useful links. Add <http://www.anglicanmediasydney.asn.au/newams.htm> to your favourites!

For some stimulating Christian reading, try the magazine style [www.gracenotworks.com](http://www.gracenotworks.com). Aimed at a younger audience, this site is both "hip" and theologically "evangelical". If the lime-green colour scheme isn't to your liking, I recommend printing out the content in a safer monochrome.

If you've been asked to fill in for the regular preacher at your church and you don't know where to start – or even if you are the regular preacher – take a look at the Bible teaching resources at the website of *Perspective Magazine* at [www.perspective.org.au](http://www.perspective.org.au). As one of the members of the Perspective team, I'm a little biased – but you may find the articles, sermons and series outlines useful.

Contemporary Christian music resources are available at [www.emu.mu](http://www.emu.mu), the website of Emu Music (formerly Plainsong). You can listen to the free song-of-the-month, get up-to-date news on coming releases, and order from the full catalogue.

Finally, you'll naturally want to visit [www.presbyterian.org.au](http://www.presbyterian.org.au), the official website of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. There are links to each state, and each local church website as well.

The ever-growing, ever-changing nature of the Internet means a snapshot like this can only give a glimpse of the resources that are available online. Why not send me a list of your own favourites, which we'll check and publish in an upcoming issue. Email me at [phil@mpc.org.au](mailto:phil@mpc.org.au).

*Phil Campbell is editor of Culture Watch, and ministers at Mitchelton Presbyterian Church, which has a website at [www.mpc.org.au](http://www.mpc.org.au).*



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# Young and restless

*What do young people want? The answer might surprise you.*

**T**he patient was desperately ill. He required the most specialised intensive care available. They placed him in a ward with others whose prospects were bleak. Despite all the attention his health didn't improve. Then one day, a visitor came. She was an elderly lady. She sneaked in without a badge. She just sat there with him. She quietly prayed then left.

The next day another visitor came. He sat with the boy, as a father with his son. He opened the book beside the bed and read to him. As the days went by, more of them came, old and young, some confident, others nervous. Bit by bit his health revived. What he needed was his family.

The patient is the youth of our church. Mainline denominations have been struggling to retain youth ever since the loss of a generation in the 1960s and 70s.

In some cases, we gave up trying to reach youth. It just seemed too hard. We were fearful of the challenge modern youth presented, especially our fear of change. In some cases we recognised the need and resorted to methods and models that tended to isolate youth from the rest of the church. The intensive care unit thrived, but not necessarily the long-term health of the patient!

What is the way ahead for ministry to youth? It's not a new question. There have been a number of trends over the past few decades. Tim Smith, an American writer, in *Nurturing the Soul of the Youth Worker*, has summarised the trends in that country. The 1960s saw a rapid growth in the "rally and big event" youth ministry with organisations such as Youth for Christ. The '70s produced the Jesus movement and the growth of worship and small-group Bible studies. In the '80s there was an emphasis on church growth and the "bigger is better" mentality in youth work. The '90s produced a reaction to this, with a concern for quality in youth ministry, although a lot of the focus was on image and perception.

**O**n the Australian scene we are still feeling the influence of all four trends. The big event approach is still going strong, both among charismatic and evangelical groups. Small group Bible



**Colin Spragg**

studies and new music for worship have become an integral part of many youth ministries. The church growth movement is still having an influence.

The tendency is to look to "successful" youth ministries to provide us with the answers for how to make it happen in our own congregations. Some leaders have benefited from this, while others have become even more discouraged. Teenagers themselves have developed youth-group shopping into an art form!

***What would make a family-based youth ministry different to any other ministry to youth?***

One feature of most of these trends, has been the marginalisation of parents and the wider church family from the ministry to youth. That's not to say they don't get a mention. It's just that the "cutting edge ministry" tends to be seen as the domain of youth leaders, not the family or the rest of the church.

There are reasons for this. Partly, it's a reflection of the way western culture has headed down the path of isolating youth from their parents and the rest of society. It may also be a product of the frustration youth leaders experience when others in the church are apathetic or unsupportive of their efforts to bring youth into the church. I suspect there is also a theological component. The movers and shakers in youth ministry rarely come at it from the perspective of covenant theology. Those that do are likely to appear more reactionary than progressive.

One book that has generated some interest in recent years, is *Family-Based Youth Ministry*. The author, Mark De Vries, highlights the crisis in youth ministries that generate numbers but fail to see young people proceed to adult Christian maturity. He reflects on his own

experience as a youth pastor. After 10 years he made a return visit to a church in which he had ministered. He wondered who among the youth would still be growing in their faith as adults. Almost without exception they fell within one of two categories, either:

- they came from families where Christian growth was modelled in at least one of the parents, or
- they had developed such significant connections with adults within the church that it had become an extended family for them.

How often they attended youth events was not a good predictor of which teens would grow toward Christian adulthood.

De Vries is not suggesting we scrap youth groups or Sunday Schools. They still have a vital contribution to make. However, if we neglect the crucial role of the family, either Christian parents or the extended church family, it's like chopping off our youth ministry at the knees. We want to see young people not just as keen members of our youth groups or Sunday Schools but as mature adults who stand firm in Christ.

What would make a family-based youth ministry different to any other ministry to youth? De Vries identifies two key priorities for family-based youth ministry. The first is to empower parents to nurture their children's faith. The second is to equip the extended family of the church to be a "family for our teenagers".

**T**he latter is particularly important for unchurched youth, including those from non-traditional families. They need a circle of Christian adults to model the Christian life for them. If we are genuine about family-based ministry, it will not become an excuse to neglect evangelism or ignore the special needs of youth.

Family-based youth ministry isn't necessarily new. But have we taken it seriously? There is a cost attached. Are we, as congregations, prepared to make the changes necessary to minister effectively to young people and their families? Let's see ministry to youth as a family affair, not merely an intensive care unit!

*Colin Spragg is director of training development (PY NSW).*

ap

# prayer

## SEPTEMBER 2002

- 21 God's comfort and guidance for Nicky Stock and her two young children, Interserve/APWM missionary from Mitchelton, Brisbane, following the tragic drowning of her husband Dale in Pakistan.
- 22 Presbytery of Benalla, Vic; 7 parishes and 3 home mission stations totalling 25 congregations with 770 communicants and adherents, 1 ministerial candidate, 1 retired minister; Dallas Clarnette clerk.
- 23 Annerley parish southern Brisbane; about 50 communicants and adherents and 3 elders; Paul and Carol Seiler.
- 24 Presbyterian Youth leadership and activities – Karen Astles and Gavin Boyd (NSW), David and Rachel Enchelmaier (Qld), David Graham and Gary Ware (Vic.).
- 25 Kerang home mission station, northern Victoria; about 30 communicants and adherents and 1 elder; vacant, Martin de Pyle moderator.
- 26 The educational, spiritual and social well-being of the students, staff and council of Scots School, Bathurst NSW. Mr. A. Lamrock, Principal.
- 27 Graham and Irene Hayward from Hurstville NSW who have served 30 years with Wycliffe Bible Translators in PNG based at Ukarumpa. They are now involved in administration and literacy.
- 28 Chatswood parish, northern Sydney including Lane Cove; about 115 communicants and adherents, 25 younger folk and 15 elders; Jeff and Carmelina Read.
- 29 Burwood Chinese parish, Melbourne; about 80 communicants and adherents, 20 younger folk and 3 elders; John and Liliek Elnatan.
- 30 Praise God for Gospel progress among Portugal's 10 million people in the last 25 years of religious freedom

and pray it may continue and there be ample mature church leaders; the Protestant churches are about 3.5%, the RC church 75% and 5% are non religious.

## OCTOBER

- 1 The developing Christian fellowship at historic Augusta, 320 south of Perth nurtured by Presbyterian County Ministries. Paul Bloomfield, Rockingham.
- 2 Presbytery of Dubbo, western NSW; 7 parishes and a PIM patrol, totalling 19 congregations with 930 communicants and adherents, 1 retired minister, 1 under jurisdiction; Frank Savage clerk.
- 3 Mareeba home mission station, North Queensland; about 30 communicants and adherents, 5 younger folk and 4 elders; Ed and Joy Chandler.
- 4 Eltham parish, Melbourne; about 70 communicants and adherents, 25 younger folk and 4 elders; Don and Anne Elliott.
- 5 Ann Street parish (Brisbane's oldest); about 130 communicants and adherents, 20 younger folk and 12 elders; Archie and Heather MacNicol.
- 6 Hamilton parish, Western Victoria; about 150 communicants and adherents, 10 younger folk and 7 elders; Keith and Jenny Bell.
- 7 The Moderator (John Wilson), clerks, conveners and all members of the Victorian Assembly meeting this week.
- 8 Canaan Korean parish Petersham, inner Sydney; about 50 communicants and adherents, and 15 younger folk; Won-Hyoung Moon.
- 9 The Lord's blessing and guidance on the debates, decisions and fellowship at the Victorian Assembly, and implementation in the months ahead.
- 10 Paul and Carol Lukins and their four children from Condobolin NSW, missionaries with SIM/APWM in Ethiopia, who have been studying lan-

guage and have recently relocated among the Mursi people to begin an agricultural feasibility study.

- 11 Melville Korean home mission station, Perth; about 75 communicants and adherents, 2 younger folk and 1 elder; Sang Eun and Bronwen Hong.
- 12 Presbytery of Flinders, Vic; 12 parishes and 2 home mission stations totalling 18 congregations with 1110 communicants and adherents, 1 missionary, 3 retired ministers, 1 under jurisdiction; Ian Brown clerk.
- 13 Fayek and Samira Iskander, originally from Egypt, ministering to Arabic-speaking people in Sydney.
- 14 The staff and students (full- and part-time) of the Reformed College of Ministries, Brisbane – Ian McIver, principal.
- 15 Rick and Kayleen Manton in their koorie (aboriginal) APWM ministry in outer western Sydney.
- 16 The newly-recognized Deaf Congregation in Melbourne; Tony and Anne Salisbury.
- 17 Cecily Moar, OMF/APWM worker in Korea over 20 years, as she works as OMF Prayer Facilitator and visits other states (and Korean congregations) from her Brisbane base.
- 18 Rutherford parish near Newcastle, NSW including Kurri Kurri; about 90 communicants and adherents, 20 younger folk and 7 elders; vacant.
- 19 Two Australian Presbyterian ministers working in Singapore – Don and Betty Brookes (SA) at Prinsep St. Presbyterian Church and David and Glenda Burke (NSW) at Orchard Rd Presbyterian church.
- 20 Praise God for the faithfulness and growth of the Christian church among Sudan's 30 million people (23% – 70% in the south) despite dreadful persecution from the Islamist government especially since 1985; pray for them.

# Australian Presbyterian

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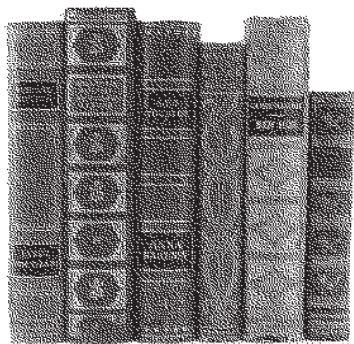
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# books



## A Touch of Heaven on Earth:

### Christian teaching on Love

T.L. Wilkinson

Melbourne, 1999

*Reviewed by Tracy Gordon*

In this book, retired Presbyterian minister Dr Tom Wilkinson sets out to explore at length the subject of love from a Christian perspective.

Professor Wilkinson writes: "Probably most Christians give very little hard thought to the meaning and application of love to their life and are content with rather vague good intentions or feelings. Yet we do need a more informed conception of love to overcome our ignorance and give us a clearer grasp of its meaning in its different contexts."

And so he examines such topics as the importance of love, love as attitude and activity, loving God in the whole of our life, and love and justice.

The book is strewn with anecdotes, quotes and references to works by various influential people in history.

Numerous Scripture references direct the path Professor Wilkinson takes and the topics addressed. Doctrinal teaching is blended with pastoral instruction and guidance, no doubt influenced by his previous pastoral responsibilities in three churches, as well as his professorial duties

at the Reformed Theological College, Geelong.

In the latter half of the book, Professor Wilkinson takes an in-depth look at the love chapter of 1 Corinthians.

The book is thorough in its approach to Christian discussions of many aspects of love and will no doubt prove helpful and enlightening to both the theologically trained and the layperson.

*Tracy Gordon worships at Ashfield Presbyterian Church.*

## Blood Brothers

Elias Chacour

Grand Rapids: Chosen, 1984.

*Reviewed by Ian Smith*

For those who were brought up with Sunday School stories of the people of Israel conquering the land of Canaan, the current situation in the Middle East may seem to be a repeat of the mighty tales of Joshua, as the armies of Israel conquer the "giants" who are in the land. If this is your view, then it is time to read *Blood Brothers* by Elias Chacour.

*Blood Brothers* has helped me to evaluate afresh the plight of the Palestinians in the light of the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948. For those who see the nation of Israel as the rightful inheritance of the Jewish people, there is a need to remember that this section of the globe did not remain unoccupied for 1900 years — from the time of the Jewish Wars in the first century until 1948.

For the past two millennia, this land has been settled by many peoples, most particularly the Palestinians. For those of us who are Christians, it is a timely reminder that many of the Palestinian people are Christians. Elias Chacour is such a man. In *Blood Brothers* he recounts how before

1948, Jews and Palestinians lived in harmony. However, with the rise of Zionism after World War II, this harmony disappeared. The Zionist cry was for the re-establishment of Israel — at any cost.

The account of atrocities suffered by the Palestinians is very confronting. Chacour recounts how his family was "tricked" out of its home and land. He tells how his father and brothers were led away at gunpoint. The reader is reminded how the best land was taken from the Palestinian people and given to the new nation of Israel. And in all this the West remained silent. In the wake of the Holocaust, no nation wanted to speak against Israel.

The beauty of this book is that it does not leave the reader as an indignant recruit for the PLO. Chacour works through his reaction of bitterness until he discovers the cleansing power of grace and mercy. He longs to recapture the situation that existed before 1948: Palestinians and Jews peacefully coexisting. He reminds himself of the example of the One he calls his Champion, who said: "Blessed are the peacemakers."

In the light of the current situation in the Middle East, and a confused understanding of Biblical prophecy that sees the modern state of Israel as prophetic fulfilment, this book is very helpful. It is a "good read", written in a simple narrative style that moves at a captivating pace.

The book does not seek to solve the complex problems of the Middle East. It does, however, remind us of the Christian's responsibility to speak out against injustice. It is also a reminder that the promises that God gave to Abraham are not fulfilled in the establishment of a political state, but in the sending of the Messiah.

*Rev Ian Smith is New Testament lecturer at the Presbyterian Theological Centre,*

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# Scripture: knots and notes

*Nothing tangles the web more quickly than twisting Scripture.*

**T**he Scriptures claim to be the very Word of God, yet their teaching can be distorted. In his second letter, Peter comments that there are some things in Paul's epistles that are hard to understand. He then adds that untaught and unstable people twist these to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:16).

This is tragic, but we ought not to be surprised. Satan dared to use Scripture in tempting Christ. He cited Psalm 91: "He shall give his angels charge over you," and "In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone" (Mt. 4:6).

The quotation is accurate but the context is inappropriate – God's promises of protection do not extend to acts of grandstanding recklessness, such as casting oneself off the temple. Hence Jesus' response: "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'" (Mt. 4:7). If the devil cannot get us to ignore or disobey Scripture, he will try to get us to distort and twist it.

Peter was certainly right that Paul's words were being twisted, even in his own day. Paul himself lamented that his strong emphasis on the free grace and forgiveness of God was being used in a slanderous way by some, as though he were preaching "let us do evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8). In 2 Corinthians 3:6 we read that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life". This does not mean (as many think) that the gist of the law is more significant than the letter of the law, but that the Law of God kills us (because of our sin), whereas the Spirit alone can grant us new life (cf. Jn 3:3-6).

**I**t is not only the apostle Paul who has suffered at the hands of those who wanted to misuse the Scriptures. The apostle John declares most movingly and simply that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). However, there have been plenty of people who have wanted to argue that because of this, God will not hurt anybody in the judgment. But it is also the apostle John who declares that whoever did not obey the Son will have the wrath of God abiding on him (Jn 3:36).



**Peter Barnes**

A church not far from where I used to work managed to derive the doctrine of perfectionism from 1 John 3:9: "Whoever has been born of God does not sin ... and he cannot sin." This is rather confusing, as in 1 John 1:8 we read that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us". The NIV seems to get the right idea on 1 John 3:9 where it says

***It is possible to press the words of the Bible so far that they yield not medicine, but poison.***

that "No one who is born of God will continue to sin..." The Bible is clear that perfection is demanded of us here on earth (Mt. 5:48) but we will experience it only in heaven (1 Cor. 13:12).

One could give many other examples. I once heard a Jehovah's Witness claim that Jesus's reply to the rich young ruler showed that he was not God: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (Mt. 19:17). Yet in other contexts Jesus accepted the titles of Lord and God (Jn 20:28). What Jesus was saying to the rich young ruler was: "You ought not to call me good unless you know that I am God."

Many examples, of course, are simply cases of special pleading. Samuel Angus used to argue that because the parable of the prodigal son does not mention the atonement, it is possible for sinners simply to be sorry for their sins and return to God without any need for the atoning sacrifice of Christ. A child in Sunday School would have been able to tell Professor Angus that Jesus never intended to say everything in every parable.

The lesbian Uniting Church minister, Dorothy McRae-McMahon cites "there is nothing unclean of itself" (Rom. 14:14) as a defence of homosexuality. But Genesis

19 is about homosexuality and Romans 14 is about matters like holy days and food laws. Matthew 7:1 ("Judge not, that you be not judged") has become a favourite text today. Again, one only has to look to the context where Jesus warns about not giving what is holy to dogs (Mt. 7:6) and false prophets who come as wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt. 7:15) to see that Jesus is not forbidding all judging. Rather, he is calling on us to judge ourselves first before we dare to judge others (Mt. 7:2-5).

As J. C. Ryle said, "it is possible to press the words of the Bible so far that they yield not medicine, but poison."

When Scripture is played off against Scripture, some simply shrug their shoulders, and say that it is just a matter of interpretation. As Hilaire Belloc put it, in his own playful way:

*The question's much too wide,  
And much too round and much too hollow,  
And learned men on either side,  
Use arguments we cannot follow.*

**T**he 17th century poet John Dryden saw the problem, and took refuge in the authority of the pope in Rome:

*The book thus put in every vulgar hand,  
Which each presumed he best could understand;  
Study and pains were now no more their care;  
Texts were explained by fasting and by prayer.  
This was the fruit the private spirit brought;  
Occasioned by great zeal and little thought.*

The right response, however, is not scepticism nor is it the supreme authority of any pope or council. It is as the Westminster Confession of Faith says: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself." Read with reverence and humility, the Scripture will speak to our souls. The result will not be confusion and distortion. With good reason, Arthur Pink's final words on this earth were "the Scriptures explain themselves".

*Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, Sydney.* 