

Prayer Strategy for the Spheres of Influence

Second Quarter 2017

In this edition...

From the National Coordinators	2
God's Way – The Only Way	2-3
<i>"An increasing number of people are struggling to find meaning, purpose and satisfaction in their lives and experiencing a high level of fear and anxiety in everyday living" Len Forster</i>	
'Social Justice' Versus Biblical Justice	4-5
<i>"This may help to clear up some muddled thinking, and be clearer on what biblical justice is all about - it is at least far more than the usual notions of social justice being peddled today" Bill Muehlenberg</i>	
Jesus is the Justice of God	6
<i>"What qualifies you to be a witness? Do you know Jesus personally? Has he done anything in your life for you personally that you can testify about?" Allan Parker</i>	
πορνεία – porneia	7
<i>"According to the world it is natural/right for pre-marital sex, co-habitation - for some a "try before you buy attitude", others because it is "love" or just because it is what others do" Dennis & Ann Outred</i>	
Pentecost Eve 2017	8-13
Exploring God's Unique Responses To Our Prayers	14-15
<i>"All of us agree that prayer makes a difference in our life. However, when it comes to the answer to prayers, we all have different opinions" Shivraj Mahendra</i>	
Christianity - Comfortable and Reasonable?	16-19
<i>"We seem to have a tendency to bend the teaching of the gospel and the discipline and cost linked to discipleship in order to make the church more comfortable." Michael Huggins</i>	
What does your Grandparenting look like?	20
Announcing the Next Grandparents' Day of Prayer - September 10th	21
<i>"Our grandchildren and their parents need our earnest prayers. They need united prayer, a genuine, unified prayer for our hope and dreams for the next generation to be realized" Lillian Penner</i>	
Marriage at Work – 2. The Hope of Israel	22-23
<i>"A level of depth and intimacy enters into work when we appreciate employment as a space where our Husband's gifts and graces can be revealed" John Yates</i>	
Have We Forgotten Something?	24-25
<i>"When you have this love and this power - there are no obstacles to forgiveness" Bjorn Schmid</i>	
Fusion Nepal Newsletter	26-27
<i>"Lord, Please make me into the image of Jesus. I know this coming year will be full of joy and pain, success and failure-but in it all, let me reflect You First. Amen!." from Ruth Gautam</i>	
RICE SOWERS Fundraising Dinner	30
Queensland Theological College - Carl Trueman and Paul Tripp	30

These articles reflect the opinion and witness of the respective authors, which may or may not align with your own; consider this with Ephesians 4:1-7 in mind.

From the National Coordinators

Dear family,
welcome to the second quarterly edition of the newsletter for 2017.

In past years, for the months of April, May and June we asked you to pray for Business (Trade and Finance), Law and Justice, and Religion and Philosophy. We hope that you are still praying into these spheres, and for the next 3 months please also uphold in prayer those involved in the spheres of the Arts, Education, and Charity and Not-for-Profit Welfare.

A particular standout for me in this edition is Allan Parker, President of The Justice Foundation proclaiming in complete fulfilment of Christ's command to us (Acts 1:8):

"You will either be a good witness for Jesus or a bad witness for Jesus, but you will be a witness."

Let us not hide the light we have been given to light our homes, our workplaces and everywhere else we go.

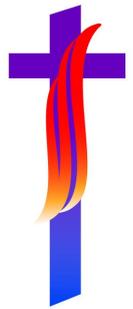
I urge you to read through these articles; they are full of admonishment, teaching and everlasting hope and joy, but above all they are written by people who love you. So consider each article a letter of love from the author to you - the ultimate author of course being the Father himself, the author of love.

As our brother Shivraj Mahendra explains in his article this month, God always responds to our prayers if we pray earnestly and from our hearts. Prayer from our mouths and minds alone are not enough; it must come from deep within us, 'out of my innermost being' (ref. John 7:28). Pentecost Eve 2017 was an amazing gathering of your family in Sydney and other places across Australia and beyond praying earnestly for you; the Church and Bride of Christ - I believe God has heard these prayers and will respond.

Grace and peace,

Bjorn Schmid, Public Officer for Transforming Sydney

prayerstrategy.org businesswomenhealingministry.org transformingsydney.org



TRANSFORMING
SYDNEY



God's Way – The Only Way

From Len Forster

It is not hard to see that there is something wrong in our world today. We enjoy the most developed technologies and standards of living the world has ever known, with labour saving devices at every hand and facilities for leisure and entertainment, never before envisaged. Yet, an increasing number of people are struggling to find meaning, purpose and satisfaction in their lives and experiencing a high level of fear and anxiety in everyday living. Community dysfunction is widespread, on the local level with conflict, drug abuse, violence and crime and on the international scene tensions, terrorism, war and refugee displacement. Despite stricter legal regimes and harsher penalties at home and agreements which prove to be hollow rhetoric internationally, the problems are, not only, not being solved, but escalating.

Society stumbles on, unaware that it is not only failing to enjoy the happiness and satisfaction that mankind was created for, but actually rushing ever closer and closer to the brink of self destruction, arising from the mostly unrecognised consequences of its own ill-considered actions and behaviour. The accelerating speed of deterioration in the quality of life across the whole of society would indicate that the situation is even now at crisis level.

This is not surprising to us as Christians, because we know that there is an important element missing, which most people fail to recognise. The God who created this whole universe and mankind itself is absent. He has over the last four thousand years been revealing himself to us, his creation, and has given us a clear plan for successful living, which applies to both ourselves, and the ongoing care of his beautiful world. We can understand a major part of this revelation through the life and death of his only Son Jesus Christ and for two thousand years now have been blessed through his Church and by the Holy Spirit, whose coming we have just celebrated at Pentecost. This Holy Spirit pours out his grace and inspiration to plan, direct and control our personal lives so that we bring order, happiness, harmony and peace to ourselves and through us to the whole of society. In the gifts of God's Holy Spirit we cooperate with his plan of love, goodness, mercy and compassion for all mankind. These are the qualities needed to reform the world. We have long known that 'God is love' and that loving relationship with him and each other is the key to the building of his wonderful plan for us.

(continued next page)

Prayer and action are both necessary. God's work in this world is achieved by the effort of human hands, feet and tongues as Christ's example has shown to us. Our physical help in care, charity and mercy is necessary, as is our spreading the word when public and political action is proposing social change contrary to moral standards and harmful to the community. Following Christ's own example, given in scripture prayer through him to the Father is also vital in producing results. Only by both prayer and action will we arrest the alarming path of society toward disintegration and be blessed with the joy, peace and salvation which God desires for each of us.

Society is not short of good intentions. Many people keenly feel the need to foster peace and goodwill, but they find themselves unable to solve, or even to make any headway in grappling with the myriad problems. Many well meaning initiatives crumble and fall by the wayside and hopeful rhetoric too often proves hollow. Only God can solve the problems, and he most certainly will if we humbly approach him in prayer, and show ourselves willing to physically play our part.

As Christians we are called to be 'The salt of the earth and the light to the world'. Now is the time for us to step up and use all the resources in our power to let the truth of the Gospel be known in both our prayers and our actions. It must be repeated that the renaissance we so urgently need, cannot and will not be accomplished by man alone. God's help sought by our prayer is essential!

This Second Quarter 2017 e-newsletter reaches us hot on the heels of our celebration of Pentecost. Let all of us, clergy and lay alike, immerse ourselves with enthusiasm and in the inspiration which the Holy Spirit pours out on us at this time. The Prayer Strategies for the Spheres of influence in this quarter call our focus towards:

1. Religion and Philosophy: We are God's people created in his image and therefore enjoy intrinsic dignity and equal inalienable rights to the bounty of his creation. Our prayer for this intention must therefore ask God's grace to strengthen the outpouring of our love towards all people, regardless of race, social background or religion, rich and poor alike.

We pray that both personal and community attitudes and actions be focused to reflect equal regard and consideration for each and every man, woman or child, from conception to death at God's appointed time. **God graciously hear us.**

2. Law and justice: With a world population of more than seven billion people entitled to, but not enjoying equal rights and each with a right to free will, it is essential that communities function in the God given attributes of love, mercy, compassion and tolerance. Only God is entitled to judge. Man is not authorized by God as an instrument of punishment, and certainly not that of capital punishment. Man is charged with moderating and regulating the conduct of society to the exercise of those attributes and to the prevention of harm and damage to the community caused by the inevitable transgressions that will occur within the flawed nature present in all mankind. Let us always strive to act with sincere esteem towards our families, friends, fellow workers. Let us also act in our community to promote and influence this respect to all.

We pray therefore for community leaders, police, judges, governments and parliaments to always act impartially, respecting the universal rights of all in their actions. May they exercise their respective roles with God's wisdom, with impartiality and compassion. **God graciously hear us.**

3. Trade and finance: The provision of the goods, services and essentials to mankind has become highly sophisticated in both the technological requirements needed for physical merchandise and commodities. But the structure of services and the regulation of finance necessary to equality and fairness in the sharing of the worlds resources between all peoples is seriously failing. This is not because the resources of the Earth are deficient, but because the handling and management of food, resources and services is not in accord with the principles of equality and justice required by love and esteem. Too often it is the lure of the money and the exercise of the power and authority it accords to the merchants that rule dealings. Greed and dishonesty become the prime motivation rather than the equality and justice due to the consumer.

We therefore pray for a radical change in the attitudes of all those involved in trade and finance, that they come to realise that people come before power and wealth and attune their objectives and actions with the value and rights of the people with whom they are dealing.

God graciously hear us.



'Social Justice' Versus Biblical Justice

By Bill Muehlenberg, posted Sep 1, 2010 on Cultrewatch

<https://billmuehlenberg.com/2010/09/01/'social-justice'-versus-biblical-justice/>

The concept of justice has filled thousands of volumes over the centuries. It is foolish of me to attempt to do it justice in a short article (pun not intended), but perhaps a few introductory remarks can at least be attempted. Indeed, this may be the first of a number of articles on a rather detailed and complex discussion.

Let me begin by saying that traditionally there have been several main views of justice. Let me concentrate on just two: retributive justice and distributive justice. The former goes back at least to Aristotle and means simply, "to each man his due". It has to do with giving people what they deserve. Thus we speak about 'just deserts' and so on.

The latter term is a more recent concept, and has to do with equality of outcome, and redistributing certain goods, including wealth, to ostensibly help out the less fortunate. It is what is often meant when the left – both secular and religious – speak about social justice.

At the risk of oversimplifying matters, it seems that the notion of retributive justice is more closely aligned with biblical notions of justice, while distributive justice is further afield from Scriptural principles. But this can hardly be defended adequately in a brief article, even in a most superficial fashion.

We would need to closely examine biblical terms such as justice, righteousness and the like. We would need to look at contemporary economic options as well. And we would need to study the historical record to see whether wealth redistribution has in fact worked, and really helped the poor. But let me tease things out just a bit more here.

Equality of opportunity is one thing, but equality of outcome is quite another. To enforce equality of outcome, you have to treat unequals equally, which is neither fair nor just. Given that we are all different (not equal in talents, giftings, motivations, etc), you have to use unequal treatment to get equal results. Many have written on this obvious point. Dr Mark Cooray is as good as anyone here.

In 1988 the Australian law professor wrote an important book entitled, *The Australian Achievement: From Bondage To Freedom*. While the entire volume is quite helpful, I draw your attention to ch. 20: "Equality of Opportunity and Equality of Outcome".

Says Cooray, "Equality of opportunity is best expressed in the phrase – career open to talents. No arbitrary obstacles should prevent people from achieving those public positions which their talents fit and which their values lead them to seek. Neither

birth, nationality, colour, religion, sex nor any other equivalent characteristic should determine the public opportunities that are open to a person – only talent and achievement.

"Thus, equality of opportunity simply spells out the concept of equality before the law. And it has meaning and importance precisely because people are different in their genetic and cultural characteristics, and hence both want to and can pursue different careers. It is important to note that such equality of opportunity does not present any conflict with freedom. Quite the opposite. Equality of opportunity and freedom are two facets of the same basic concept."

He continues, "Equality of outcome is a radically different concept. Equality of opportunity provides in a sense that all start the race of life at the same time. Equality of outcome attempts to ensure that everyone finishes at the same time. To slightly change what the Dodo said in Alice in Wonderland, 'Everybody must win and all must have prizes'. That is the goal of radical socialism. Everyone must be a winner, everyone must be equal. Socialists do not really point towards absolute equality but they point to vague ideas of fairness and justness."

Such policies decrease equality and stymie economic growth: "This is not merely because they directly attack equality of opportunity in the sense of freedom to pursue an interest or vocation, but because by destroying incentive they inhibit that individual initiative which has been responsible for modern economic progress, growth and development. Modern economic development has systematically raised the lot of the ordinary man to a level of prosperity undreamed of in past ages, when such prosperity was confined to a few.

"This development was the direct result of individual initiative and endeavour within a system which allowed individual incentive and free activity. By directly impinging upon individual incentive and free activity, egalitarian policies and programmes actually inhibit the process of economic growth and development, thus inhibiting the only mechanism in history by which inequality has been systematically, successfully and continuously ameliorated on a large scale."

Jewish commentator Michael Medved has just penned a piece on similar themes. He begins this way: "For more than a hundred years liberals and conservatives have been arguing over the true meaning of justice. The left emphasizes just

(continued next page)

'Social Justice' Versus Biblical Justice (...continued)

outcomes – seeking smaller gaps between rich and poor, and a comparably dignified standard of living for all members of society.

"The right stresses just procedures – making sure that individuals keep the fruits of their own labors and remain secure in their property, without seizure by their neighbors or by government. Liberals accept unequal, potentially unfair treatment by government in order to achieve fair results; conservatives accept unequal, potentially unfair results so long as every citizen receives fair and comparable treatment by government.

"These arguments have raged for generations without definitive resolution, but that doesn't mean that both sides are right, or that the questions that divide them offer no final answers. In fact, key Biblical passages provide a strong indication that conservative concepts of economic justice comport far more closely to the religious and philosophical foundations of western civilization."

He explores various biblical texts, and draws upon some commentary by Jewish thinkers: "For instance, a key passage in the Book of Leviticus (19:15) declares: 'You shall not commit a perversion of justice; you shall not favor the poor and you shall not honor the great; with righteousness (Tzedek) shall you judge your fellow.' Amazingly, the Bible warns us not to 'favor the poor' even before we're instructed 'not to honor the great,' because partiality for the unfortunate counts as an even stronger human temptation.

"And what about all the Biblical demands, in both Old and New Testaments, to show compassion to widows, orphans and the poor? Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi), the 11th century giant who became the most influential of all Torah expositors, explains that the verse in Leviticus draws an all-important, eternal distinction between charity and justice: 'Do not say that since the wealthy man is obligated to help the poor one, it is proper for a judge to rule in favor of the poor litigant so that he will be supported in dignity. The Torah insists that justice be rendered honestly; charity may not interfere with it.'

"In other words, assistance for the

destitute remains an individual obligation on God-fearing individuals, but should not bring a tilt to the law to favor the less fortunate. It is no coincidence, surely, that this crucial verse in Leviticus appears just two sentences away from the most famous declaration in all the Bible: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (19:18). This famous line makes clear that the same God who wants us to deal kindly with our fellow human beings, also requires that we respect and honor ourselves.

"You don't demean or damage yourself for the sake of your fellow; the Bible consistently backs the conservative supposition that we help others best when we help ourselves. If such Biblical passages strongly support the conservative conception of justice, then why are so many churches, synagogues and divinity schools filled with outspokenly liberal clergy?"

As mentioned, far more needs to be said about this difficult subject. But this may help to clear up some muddled thinking, and help us to be clearer on what biblical justice is all about. It is at least far more than the usual notions of social justice being peddled today. And it certainly is more than just state-enforced wealth redistribution.

www.ourcivilisation.com/cooray/btof/chap20.htm

townhall.com/columnists/MichaelMedved/2010/09/01/which_side_is_god_on

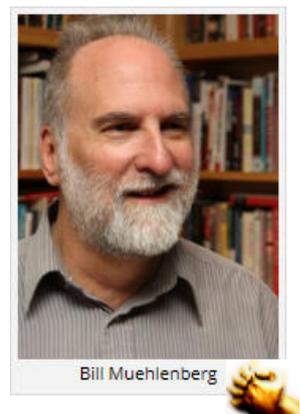
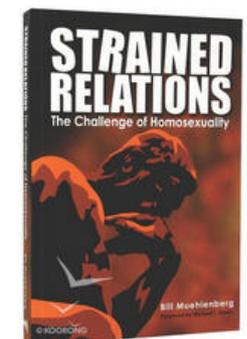
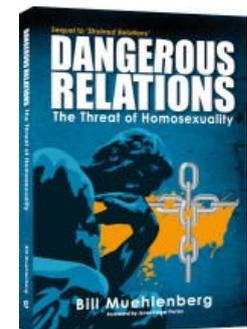
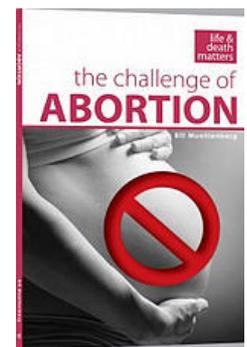
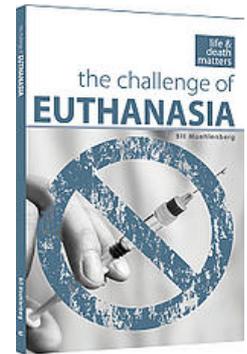
About Culture Watch - billmuehlenberg.com

We live in an age where we see evidence of cultural decline, the erosion of values, the decline of civility, the denial of truth and the elevation of unreason. Many people are asking, "Where is our culture heading?"

This website is devoted to exploring the major cultural, social and political issues of the day. It offers reflection and commentary drawing upon the wealth of wisdom found in the Judeo-Christian tradition. It offers reflective and incisive commentary on a wide range of issues, helping to sort through the maze of competing opinions, worldviews, ideologies and value systems. It will discuss critically and soberly where our culture is heading.

Happy reading!

Latest Books



Jesus is the Justice of God

By Allan E. Parker, J.D., President, The Justice Foundation

The Bible says that Jesus fulfills the Justice of God. What does that mean? It means that Jesus fulfilled the justice requirements of an eternally just God by dying on the cross for our sins. That is why John can say, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9.

Why is it just?

If someone forgives you for something you did to them, that would be mercy, not justice. If a judge says to you, "It doesn't matter that you've murdered someone. It's OK with me. You can walk away free." That would not seem **just**. The first is mercy if someone we have sinned against forgives us. It is the mercy of God, if he forgives us, but why would it be justice? And if a judge did it, it would seem unjust, in fact. But in this case, the injured party by our sin is God, so He can be merciful. David said, "I have sinned against you and you alone." Psalms 51 But God is also just, not only merciful.

The amazing thing is that the requirements of the law - such as "Thou shalt not murder" Exodus 20:13 - and the requirement that there be a death penalty for murder, "by man shall your blood be shed" Gen. 9:6 were fulfilled when Jesus became man and willingly died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. The Bible says it another way: "Your sins were nailed to the cross." Colossians 2:14. The "indictment", the charges against you, were nailed to the cross.

God is extremely concerned about justice and we tend to forget that. Justice and righteousness are the foundation of God's throne. Psalms 97:2; Psalms 89:14. We know God is a judge but we tend to forget how extremely concerned with justice He is. A judge deals with life and death and deals with justice. When His own Son at Gethsemane asked Him, "Is there any other way to satisfy this debt? Any other way to discharge this indictment?" God, the perfect, impartial judge said to His own Son, "No". What other earthly judge would not have bent the rules for His own Son?

Witnesses

Another indication of the importance of justice in legal terms to God is that all Christians are commanded to be witnesses. He said to his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth." Acts 1:8.

What qualifies you to be a witness? Generally speaking, you must have personal knowledge of the facts about which you are speaking to testify in court. Do you know Jesus personally? Has he done anything in your life for you personally that you can testify about? If you can't answer yes to both those questions, then you may not be a born-again Christian. In fact, you probably are not. If you are a born-again Christian, then you will either be a good witness for Jesus or a bad witness for Jesus, but you will be a witness. If you are silent about what he has done for you, you are a bad witness. As a lawyer, I can't prove anything in court without witnesses. If you deny him publicly, you are a bad witness.

You will either be a good witness for Jesus or a bad witness for Jesus, but you will be a witness - if you are silent about what he has done for you, you are a bad witness.

How can you be a good witness? By speaking up for Him publicly and telling people what he has done for you in your life. Has He sustained you through a trial? Share that testimony with others. Has He performed a miracle of healing in your life? Share that testimony with others. Has He provided you a good job? Share that testimony with others. Has He given you a place to live? Share that testimony with others. Has he given you food, shelter, clothing? Share that testimony with others. Be a good witness. Serve the Lord God, who is the Judge of all the universe with gladness, joy and praise.

Martyrdom

Finally, when Jesus said to His disciples - "Be my witnesses" in the Greek the word is "martir" from which we get our word, martyr. It is only because so many of the early witnesses were put to death for their testimony (their speaking about Jesus) that martyr came to mean "one who dies for the faith." Ask the Holy Spirit for that kind of faith. We may all need that kind of faith soon.



πορνεία – porneia

The definition of πορνεία, porneia, in Strongs will be known by some but is worth repeating *“harlotry (including adultery and incest); figuratively, idolatry: — fornication. Fornication being illicit sexual intercourse, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc. sexual intercourse with close relatives [Leviticus 18] sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman [Mark 10:11-12]”*

According to the world model it is natural/right for pre-marital sex, co-habitation - for some a “try before you buy attitude”, others because it is “love” or just because it is what others do! We only need to look at some of the advertising around us to see how “sex- saturated” the world is. It is no wonder that without correct equipping, many people, particularly teenagers, feel the need to be sexually active. This is probably not helped by the current tendency of marriage not occurring until the median age of 31.8 for women and 29.8 for men (2015 figures per ABS). In some 81% of marriages in 2015, couples had cohabited before marriage (ABS).

The temptations are great, and the reasons may be many, but there is the consistency in scripture in teaching self-control rather than indulgence [see Galatians 5:19-24, 1 Corinthians 10:13]. Scripture also shows us that God designed sex to be undertaken within marriage, between husband and wife. [Matthew 15:19-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 6:9-11, 6:16-20, 7:36-38, Ephesians 5:3-5, Colossians 3:5-6] All too often there is a price paid where sex occurs outside of marriage, such as the unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and even emotional pain which can even surface at a later time e.g. on marriage.

Some might even say that there is no specific prohibition in scripture against sex between an unmarried man and unmarried woman, and they would be right. But, in the New Testament “sexual immorality” or as translated in the King James “fornication” is denounced some 25 times.

“Then He [Jesus] said, “What comes out of a person — that defiles him. For from within, out of people’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, promiscuity, stinginess, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a person.” [Mark 7: 20;23 HCSB]

We also see in the writings of the apostle Paul the following:

“Run from sexual immorality! “Every sin a person can commit is outside the body.” On the contrary, the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. Don’t you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.” [1 Corinthians 6:18-20 HCSB]

“Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I tell you about these things in advance — as I told you before — that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” [Galatians 5:19-21 HCSB]

“For this is God’s will, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality, so that each of you knows how to control his own body in sanctification and honor, not with lustful desires, like the Gentiles who don’t know God.” [1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 HCSB]

God cares about His church – a few years ago, the writer was teaching in this area and honouring marriage, including the wrongs of pre-marital sex and cohabitation. For the message, I spoke with the aid of a churched, single young lady interpreter who was unknown to me, and she did not have prior knowledge of my message. I was later told by the pastor of the church the interpreter was herself in the situation I had been speaking about and he, up to that time, had not spoken with her or her partner, also single, about their relationship – he was waiting for an opportune time!

πορνεία – porneia is a blemish within our nation, our city – Sydney, our community and also regrettably within some parts of the body of the church. A blemish that we need to urgently treat through teaching/equipping for the ministry of life and preparing the church for her Bride.

Dennis & Ann Outred, Marriage Week Australia



Pentecost Eve 2017

Compiled by Lilian Schmid, Convenor of Transforming Sydney, Coordinator of Prayer Strategy for the Spheres of Influence

The Feast of Pentecost

According to the Christian Bible, it was on the day of Pentecost when the disciples prayed together and the Holy Spirit descended on them (Acts 2:1-4). They immediately began to preach with boldness about Jesus Christ to Jewish people from all over the world who had come to Jerusalem (Acts 2:5-12) for the Feast of Shavuot.

For Christians Pentecost not only commemorates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit but also marks the birth of the Christian Church. Although it is not certain when Christians started observing Pentecost as a regular celebration, it may have been early as the first century CE.

Pentecost is also called White Sunday, Whitsuntide, or Whitsun by Anglican and Celtic communities in modern times, and is the period beginning with the Saturday before Whitsunday and ending the following Saturday. The Jewish feast of the first-fruits or *Shavuot* is 50 days after the feast of *Passover*, which flows directly into church tradition: Pentecost is seven weeks (50th day) from Easter Sunday. In some Orthodox churches, Easter is observed after the date set by the western churches and therefore Pentecost is also celebrated later.

The Easter date depends on the ecclesiastical approximation of the vernal (March) equinox. However because much of the Orthodox church still observe holidays according to the Julian calendar rather than the Gregorian calendar adopted by the western churches, the date for Easter varies between the two congregations. The calculation of days for Easter and Pentecost is not inconsistent, but the base calendar for determination of dates is different. Pentecost in 2017 was special; the calendars coincided and the Eastern Orthodox and Western Churches celebrated Pentecost together.¹

Pentecost 2017

Pentecost this year also marked the golden anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic renewal that started during the "Duquesne Weekend" on February 17-19 1967.²

When we started Transforming Sydney in 2009 we knew God bestowed upon us a mission to connect, pray, move and honour the body of Christ together. The body is a unit, as Paul says in in 1 Cor 11-13:

"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who apportions them to each one as He determines.



The body is a unit, though it is comprised of many parts. And although its parts are many, they all form one body. So it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given one Spirit to drink...."

We believe that the **Proclaiming Pentecost** is God's awakening in Sydney and the whole world.

Since we started the Proclaiming Pentecost movement in 2015 in Sydney, Australia we have seen tremendous breakthrough; It is a true awakening to revive the celebration of Pentecost in unity.

Pentecost is a perfect time for Christians of all denominations to focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in their individual lives and in their worshipping communities, while commemorating the beginning of the Church some 2000 years ago.

Sydney leaders from all denominations started celebrating Pentecost Eve together in one accord since 2015, it is a very significant event in Sydney

(continued next page)

¹ Refer to: <https://www.thoughtco.com/how-date-of-easter-is-calculated-542413>
<https://www.catholicweekly.com.au/why-dont-catholics-and-orthodox-celebrate-easter-on-same-date/>
http://www.newportthisweek.com/news/2017-04-13/Faith_Community/When_Easter_Merges_for_Both_Christians_and_Orthodo.html

² See <https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2017/02/18/charismatic-renewal-marks-50th-anniversary-founding/>

Pentecost Eve 2017 (...continued)

now, this mustard seed now has grown to reach other states across Australia, in Queensland and Victoria, celebrating in one accord. See below a list of states and cities celebrating Proclaiming Pentecost in Australia. Proclaiming Pentecost is a grass roots movement to celebrate Pentecost Eve in unity.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." [Acts 1:8]

We are all praying for revival and transformation for our cities. God brought Sydney together at Pentecost Eve 2015 and 2016 - read full reports here <http://www.transformingsydney.org/TSEventsPentecost2015.html> and <http://www.transformingsydney.org/TSEventsPentecost2016.html> respectively.

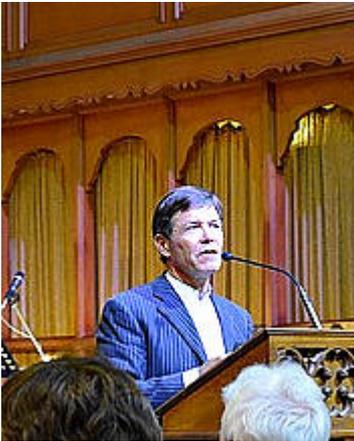
Proclaiming Pentecost's celebration in unity is taking place also in other states across Australia - feedback from these events are included at the end of this report.

Pentecost Eve 2017 in Sydney

This year Proclaiming Pentecost was celebrated on Pentecost Eve 2017 in the South of Sydney in partnership of Transforming Sydney (TS) and the South East Sydney Pastors (SESPN).

Rev Bart VandenHengel the minister of St John the Evangelist Anglican Church in Penshurst hosted the event with his congregation which has a significant number of Chinese worshippers.

Ps. Ron Brookman, Bjorn Schmid and Ron Edwards together with Rev. Bart



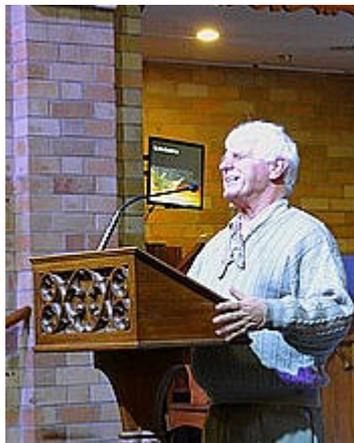
Rev. Bart VandenHengel

welcomed the pastors who represented

Parramatta City (where we celebrated Proclaiming Pentecost 2016) to hand down the baton to the South Sydney Pastors, it is a tradition that the Lord put in our heart since the beginning of Proclaiming Pentecost to pass on the blessing from region to region and welcome the pastors from each region to pray and bless each other.

An Act of Repentance also took place on behalf of the South of Sydney asking God to forgive the sins of his people in the south and ask Him to bless the South and open the door for revival and transformation

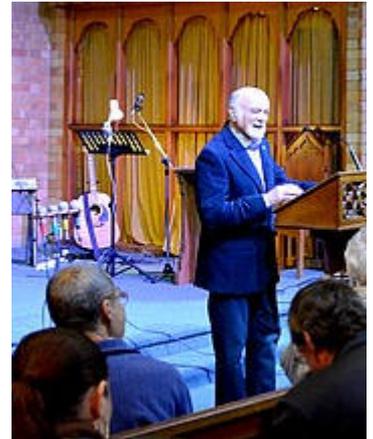
Lilian Schmid gave a brief message on Proclaiming Pentecost gatherings across Australia which were taking



Ps. Ron Brookman



Bjorn Schmid (TS)



Ron Edwards



Parramatta Pastors Rev. Simon Black and Ps. Gerald James (front) blessing and handing the baton to the South East Sydney Prayer Network leaders Ps. Ron Brookman, Ron Edwards and Rev. Bart (back)



Lilian Schmid (Convenor of TS)

(continued next page)

Pentecost Eve 2017 (...continued)

place at the same time in the states of Queensland, NSW and Victoria (see report below).



Carol Price from the Eastern suburbs of Sydney



Dr Phil Greer from Liverpool Pastors Network



Rev. Peter Robinson (Board Member of TS)

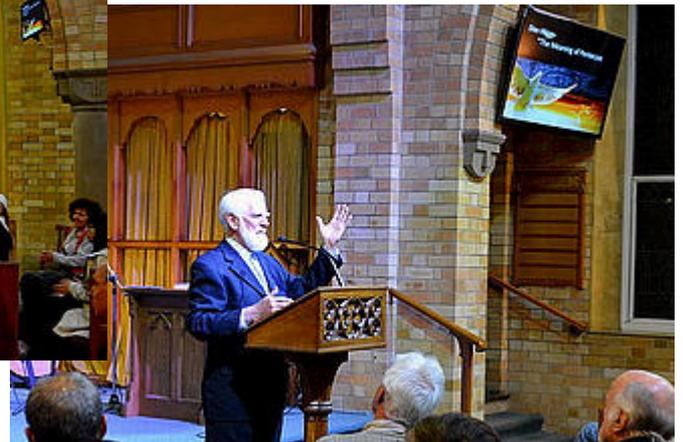
Leaders from across Sydney came to pray for the South of Sydney, for Greater Sydney and our beloved nation Australia, prayed for other nations, prayed and for the persecuted churches in Egypt and other part of the world as well. We prayed for our Church leaders across the denominations and leaders in authority so that they receive wisdom to rule our nations.

Particular focus' of prayer were for families, young adults, for marriages, for reconciliation, revival, peace in other parts of the world.



Ron Edwards (Member of ICCC, SESPN and TS) introducing Des Higgs

These prayers were supported by small group prayer. After each group of leaders



Australian elder Des Higgs (Member of TS) preaching on the 'Meaning of Pentecost'.

prayed, the small groups then prayed into the topics raised and whatever God put in their hearts.

Leaders from St John the Evangelist Church read John 14:15-20 in English and Chinese. Worship songs were played beautifully on the night by a Chinese couple from St John's; their voices lifted up the spirit of every person attending the evening - it was heaven on earth.



Attendees split into groups to pray throughout the night



St. John Musicians: Joy Watkinson (Keys), Rev. Bart (guitar) and Aisen Ju (drums - not pictured). Singers: George and Jennifer Chan

(continued next page)

Pentecost Eve 2017 (...continued)



Rachel Dunwell, Alpha NSW



Anthony Assaf from the Maronite Church



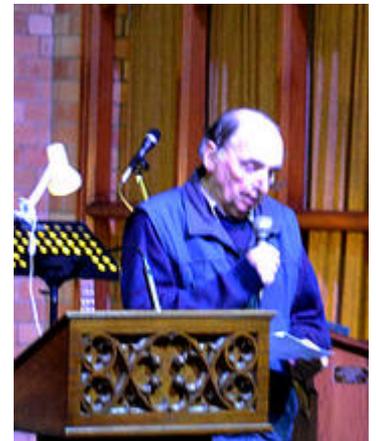
Mary Zhang from the Chinese Community in Sydney



Ps. Gideon Sunindito from the Indonesian Churches



Kathy and Dr. Stephen Van Heerden from the South suburbs of Sydney



Gordon Griffith representing the Australian Prayer Network

At the end of the evening, Ps. Ron invited Bishop Samuel Varghese (Uniting Church India) to close with a prayer and bless Sydney and Australia

We praise God for the night

Until next Pentecost 2018 which will be held in Sydney's South-West, we continue to pray for revival and transformation for our cities. As we are moving from region to region, we witness the power of the Holy Spirit sweeping across our cities, bringing holiness, revival, righteousness, healing, forgiveness through the power of prayer.

Continue to pray for us and for our mission, we honour, we bless you and we hope to see this movement growing to become an international festival that all Christians are praying together. This year is very significant because the Eastern Churches are celebrating Pentecost with the Western Churches.

Your support in prayer is very important to us, we want to witness the fire of the Holy Spirit spread across the Earth. Hallelujah!

A special thanks to Jean-Luc Schmid for the photography.

(continued next page)



Bishop Samuel Varghese blessing everyone

Pentecost Eve 2017 (...continued)

Pentecost 2017 in Other Places

Nicaragua

We are with you Sydney & 'Australia Fair' and we have shared with sister Lillian that we shall be joining you from Nicaragua in Central America, to celebrate Pentecost and seek to repeat the evangelism and church planting launched on that first week in accordance with The Great Commission of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, all those years [ago]

Have to praise God as you in Australia prayed for us in Nicaragua on the Saturday before Pentecost we saw 62 good decisions for Christ, made in a remote area of Terra Bona. It was a team of 130 young Nicaraguans we took there. Thank you Australia Fair believers we [are with] you!!! We also prayed for you on Pentecost.

Pastors Syd & Liz Doyle (Nations Light Ministries)

Australia

Queensland

Sunshine Coast

Yes we too had a great night. Around 40+ people came, to worship and hear about the feasts. Most people were blessed through the prayer and worship, just being in His Presence which is what we want - more of His Spirit brings more intimacy which brings more Repentance which brings greater intimacy which makes us a Holy and Powerful people, for the Kingdom for our regions!

Many blessings and thanks to our Faithful Father.

Brigitte Reich

Gympie

<http://heartofgod.org.au/>

We had around 70 people join our Proclaiming Pentecost and Revival Prayer Meeting from many different churches and denominations. We are looking forward to continue the Revival Prayer Meetings every month and hope that Pentecost will be proclaimed throughout the Gympie Region in the Power of His Holy Spirit.

Be blessed!

Ps Justin Lippiatt

South Australia

Adelaide

Lilian, we experienced such an anointing of joy at our city wide meeting in Adelaide at Pentecost, and then also at church. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Jenny Hagger

Victoria

Melbourne

On Sat 3 June prayer intercessors from 5 different denominations came together at Wonga Park Redeemed Church of Christ to pray for unity in the body of Christ and to honour the Holy Spirit.

Our prayer points from Ezek 11, 18-20:

- 1) protect and deliver us from idols*
- 2) unity among / within churches*
- 3) churches filled with Holy Spirit*
- 4) keep our hearts soft*
- 5) living in obedience to God*

(continued next page)

Pentecost Eve 2017 (...continued)

Our prayers continue to see the body of Christ united under Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour in Australia and the whole world. Amen.

Blessings

Christine Hohmann-Andrasch

New South Wales

Katoomba - Blue Mountains

A combined churches celebration of Pentecost at the Katoomba Christian Convention Centre meeting hall on Jun 4 at 3pm - an event of combined praise and prayer, with several short reflections on Scripture, testifying to each other and our community about the unity we have in Christ.

250 people from 14 Upper Mountains churches celebrated Pentecost together last night – Katoomba Convention Centre was pleased to support this event alongside many others

Ps. Andy Collins

Woy Woy - Central Coast

www.societyofsaints.net/blog/let-us-pray-2017

Pentecost Sunday, 4 June 2017 at St John the Baptist Catholic Church, Woy Woy.

Formal prayers 1pm-2pm, Informal prayers 2pm onward.

Catherine Cavanagh

Penshurst - Sydney

Vision and word for Prayer night and Penshurst Anglican Church

The following is the word of encouragement received for Prayer Night and Penshurst Anglican Church last Saturday night at the Pentecost service.

I had been praying around the inside of the church and had not sensed anything unusual there.

Then just before the service started I noticed really bright colours above in the roof cavity filling it with moving items. I realised they were small angels bouncing up there

I haven't seen them like that before but have heard other people describe them.

Then as we were singing I noticed a golden mist flowing from the front of the church back down the aisle. It indicated the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Then the word I had for Minister Bart at the Penshurst Anglican Church was:-

"This church has a strong faith community at present and God honours their faithfulness and is blessing this church. This church has a long history of faithful believers.

There is great joy in their praise and worship which is mainly being generated by their Chinese members in that community."

I spoke with Ron Brookman last night and he said the minister Bart was very encouraged by this word.

Bart had told us that it affirmed impressions he had.

Hope this is helpful.

Jill Thornton,

Aglow Sutherland / Menai Baptist Church

Revivals & Awakenings

Revivals and Awakenings: each is divine in nature and often contrary or external to the programs of men (believers and unbelievers), and they have a profound effect and legacy on the communities that experience them.

7 principles (or characteristics) of revival:

- *Gods' Sovereignty (His timing - Acts 2:1)*
- *Prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:1)*
- *Unity (Acts 2:1)*
- *Obedience to the Spirit (Acts 2:4)*
- *Preaching (Acts 2:14)*
- *Repentance (Acts 2:37-38)*
- *Evangelism (Acts 2:41)*

(From "What Is Revival" in the book "Flashpoints of Revival" by Dr. Geoff Waugh)

The goal of one body, many parts (cf. 1 Cor 12:12) is most readily realised in prayer.

Christians can disagree on many matters, but can also be united to pray for the needs of our community, the prime of which is for all peoples to be restored into relationship with the Father.

Gathering together as one body, one church before our King Christ Jesus, and putting aside our differences of opinion and revelation to publicly recognise and worship the one true Lord and our Bridegroom fulfils Jesus' prayer in John 17, and unlocks transformational blessing over our nations and cities.



Exploring God's Unique Responses To Our Prayers

By Shivraj K. Mahendra

“Ask, and you will be given.” - Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:7).

The Idea of Prayer

Prayer is the key to a victorious Christian living. Prayer is a mysterious element of spirituality. It is a wonderful act of faith. Prayer is the medium through which we listen to God and receive wisdom and inspiration from Him. Prayer is the open secret of a believer's spiritual energy and strength. Prayer means talking with God. It means communicating with our heavenly Parent (God as Father or Mother). All those who believe in God, believe in the significance of prayer as well.



All of us agree that prayer makes a difference in our life. However, when it comes to the answer to prayers, we all have different opinions. Some people believe that God answers the prayers offered by the righteous or spiritual people only! Some people think that God listens to the prayers of sinners only! Still others say that God listens to the prayers of all, but does not care. All these people may have their own distinct experiences. What does your experience say? The people who pray may be different, the contents of their prayer may also be different, but the one who listens to our prayers and answers them is One and only! Then why is that there are different answers to prayers?

The Two Facts of Prayer

In prayer, you may ask whatever you want to, but there are some facts appertaining to the answers of those prayers.

The very first thing is that whether your prayer is able to reach unto God? It is true that many a times our prayers do not reach unto God. The reason for this is that most of the time our prayers are offered to be heard by people, to be admired by people, to show that we pray better than others, and so on! The prayers that pierce the heart of heaven are not so. The desperate cry arising from the depth of our painful hearts surely reaches the throne of grace. Are our prayers deep enough, genuine and powerful enough to penetrate the roofs and skies and touch the ears of heaven?

The desperate cry arising from the depth of our painful hearts surely reaches the throne of grace. Are our prayers deep enough, genuine and powerful enough to penetrate the roofs and skies and touch the ears of heaven?

The second fact is that whether God answers our prayers or not, He definitely responds to them. This means that after listening to our prayers, he does not overlook them. In response to our prayers, God teaches us some very important lessons. He “gives” us an answer; we are “given” a response. But it is we who lack the basic ability, sensitivity and patience to understand and identify His responses. There is a reason behind this situation as well. In prayer [if] we claim from God, we try to compel Him and we want our will to be done. We hardly leave our prayers at the will of God. In other words, in prayer we [sometimes] command God and demand from Him. Because of this reason when undesired responses come, our faith in God is vaporized. Has this ever happened with you?

whether God answers our prayers or not, He definitely responds to them. This means that after listening to our prayers, he does not overlook them. In response to our prayers, God teaches us some very important lessons.

The Three Answers to Prayers

Our Lord God does three things with our prayers.

First, Immediate Reply. God gives immediate answer to some of our prayers. We all easily understand,

(continued next page)

God's Unique Responses To Our Prayers (...continued)

love and accept this aspect of the answer to our prayers. "Got the desired job!" "Received the needed funds!" "Survived an accident!" To get instant reply pleases us all. At this point it is important to understand that this is the time to glorify God, to praise God. Immediate answer to our prayer means nutrition for the growth of our faith. This is God's gift and He deserves all the glory. Will you remember this as you grow in faith?

Immediate answer to our prayer means nutrition for the growth of our faith. This is God's gift and He deserves all the glory. Will you remember this as you grow in faith?

Second, Delayed Reply. Sometimes God answers our prayers with little or great delay. In any case, this comes as a difficult and challenging time. I do not need to tell how difficult it is to wait. In Hindi it is said *Intejar Kadwa Hota Hai*, that is "to wait is bitter." We all must have had the experience of waiting for someone or something at some point. How every second appears to be ages and every moment seems so distant! It is the same with waiting for answer to prayers. You pray for a dear one's healing and recovery. But you do not see any improvement. Days, weeks and months go by! After a long time you see some improvement, healed after seven years or so! Thank and praise God that He finally healed that person. Although none of us likes to wait, by a delayed answer to our prayers, God teaches us patience. Are you willing to be patient, tolerant and serene?

Although none of us likes to wait, by a delayed answer to our prayers, God teaches us patience. Are you willing to be patient, tolerant and serene?

Third, No Reply. God does not answer some of our prayers! This is the toughest, the most difficult experience of the person who prays. In this situation, our faith is put to the highest test. However, there is a secret behind our prayer going unanswered! Very few of us know that secret. God does not answer some of our prayers because He knows our ability. He knows that we can come out of that problem. He knows that we can bear that pain. He knows that we can overcome that situation. God knows that sometimes we pray to Him even for things which we ourselves can handle. Actually, God wants to lead us towards greater emotional and spiritual maturity. Therefore, He takes us through the valley-experiences, through difficult times. In Jesus Christ, He himself has suffered in this world. Should we not remember His suffering and pain?

God wants to lead us towards greater emotional and spiritual maturity. Therefore, He takes us through the valley-experiences, through difficult times

One Challenge of Prayer

People who get distressed and disheartened due to unanswered prayers are challenged to trust in the very idea of prayer. But we should never forget that however difficult the situation be, the presence of God is always there with us. The divine promise to be with us till the end of the world is the promise of God worth trusting.



Moreover, we must not forget that "*all things work for the good of those who are called according to His purpose, to those who love Him*" (Rom. 8:28). Thus, God's people need to be tension-free with regard to the answers to their prayers. We must never worry for worry is the sign of unbelief. Thus the challenge of prayer is to be worry-free prayer warriors! Jesus said, "*Ask, and you will be given.*" If not answer, surely a response will be given! In any case, we are not alone. May the Lord help us live a life of prayer!

Rev. Shivraj K. Mahendra is an emerging Christian writer. A first generation, Hindu-background follower of Jesus Christ, Shivraj is engaged in teaching, prayer and preaching and other ministries. Follow him on social media or Email: shivrajkm@gmail.com.



Christianity - Comfortable and Reasonable?

By Michael Huggins, an extract from his writings and collected quotations - <http://oxenministries.com>

RELIGION - CHRISTIANITY

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali clearly sums up Britain's historical debt to Christianity:

"The Christian faith has been central to the emergence and its development. We cannot really understand the nature and achievements of British society without reference to it"

But he also exposes the reality of spirituality across the UK today:

"...the eclipse of Christianity in this culture does not mean the demise of spirituality, that is alive and well. It does mean, though, that people are willing to believe the most outlandish and bizarre superstitions so long as they do not affect the lifestyle and choices they have made for themselves. This is very far from the teaching of the church that faith is not contrary to reason but affirms and completes it"

Michael Nazir-Ali, Triple Jeopardy For The West, 2012

Sadly, too often today our Christian Heritage is being classified or even dismissed as just a part of the imprecise term, religion:

The British are among the most sceptical in the world about religion, a global study has found. Just over a third of people in the UK believe religion has a positive role to play in our daily lives, compared to a global average of 59 per cent. More than a quarter of Britons said they believe religious belief actually has a negative impact, while in countries like America and Hong Kong very few held this opinion. The UK follows a trend in Western Europe to be sceptical of the role of religion, which is believed to be due to a greater acceptance of and number of people having secular beliefs.

Daily Telegraph 17 Apr 2014

Where Christianity grows it will be actively opposed. St Paul warns us of the struggle and where, as followers of Christ, our real enemy lies:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12

Are we in the churches here in the UK prepared to actually wrestle, to wear God's armour. Are we willing to hold up the shield of faith and learn to skilfully use the weapon He has given us – the Word of God, or must we continue to blunt the word to make ourselves more acceptable in today's society?

Back in 1974, in taking a look at events in Indonesia, Mel and Ton Tari warned:

If you really want to follow Jesus and be a 100 per cent disciple, it's going to cost you something. You are going to get jolted out of your comfortable little rut in a hurry. You're going to be thrust out into the battlefield and find yourself face-to-face with the hosts of darkness. You are going to go on an all-out offensive against Satan. The Lord will require you to stand up and fight like His soldier.

The Christian life is a rough, tough challenge. Only those who have an honest commitment to Jesus Christ – not in their mouths or minds, but in their hearts – will ever have the guts to stick it out when the going gets rough.

Mel and Ton Tari, *The Gentle Breeze of Jesus*.

Yet, outside our own comfort zones here in the West, the fact of the matter is

CHRISTIANS are the most persecuted religious group in the world with more than 90,000 killed in 2016 because of their faith, a leading religious study group director has claimed.

Will Kirby, Daily Express Dec 29, 2016

Although we may not realise it, anti-Christian powers are already both well entrenched here in the UK – and increasingly flexing their muscles:

"Judeo-Christian teaching was never perfectly applied, but it did lay a foundation for a high view of human life in concept and values. Knowing Biblical values, people viewed human life as unique – to be protected and loved – because each individual is created in the image of God.....Why has our society changed? The answer is clear. The consensus of our society no longer rests on a Judeo-Christian base, but rather on a humanistic one. Humanism makes man 'the measure of all things'. It puts man rather than God in the centre of things."

Francis A. Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, 1980

The post-religious Western World is struggling to adjust to a profound loss of moral and philosophical

(continued next page)

Christianity - Comfortable and Reasonable? (...continued)

moorings. A consequence of this radical discombobulation is widespread moral, emotional and intellectual chaos, resulting in shattered and lonely lives, emotional incontinence and gullibility to fraud and charlatany. There is an increasing tendency to live in a fantasy world where irrational beliefs in myths are thought to restore order to chaotic lives, and where psychological projection creates the comforting illusion of control the extent of Britain's transformation from a country of reason, intelligence, stoicism, self-restraint and responsibility into a land of credulousness, sentimentality, emotional excess, irresponsibility and self-obsession became shattering apparent.
Melanie Phillips, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 2011

COMFORTABLE AND RESPECTABLE CHRISTIANITY and the Spirit of Appeasement

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matt. 5:10-12

Cherry-picking Theology and Spiritual Danegeld

Historically many highly qualified and respected church leaders gave the impression that the righteousness God seeks to be harsh, restricting and virtually impossible to accomplish, all inconsistent with the heart of a tender, compassionate, loving and gracious Saviour – and far beyond what can be found within men.

One commentator, however recently complained of Western churches being 'elastic' with the Gospel, and of replacing the demands of love with 'tolerance of anything'. A few years ago Tom Holland wrote of Britain

"To be sincere is uncool. To be deeply spiritual is the height of embarrassment."

Ann Holt, Director of Programmes at the Bible Society said Christians often had only themselves to blame.

"It is not just journalists who have no theology; believers have none either. People think, 'We don't need to fear Christian belief because most Christian believers don't believe it'. If they did, our lives would be very different. The problem for the church is, we just don't know how to live our religion."

An Allegory:

My late mother-in-law so loved Jesus. She was always a wonderful inspiration and example to me.

As she became more elderly, she developed a bad back, and was sent to local hospital for tests. After a number of visits, tests and careful calculations by sensitive and expert staff, a very specially constructed surgical corset was made to support her back.

The great day came when mother returned home, resplendently attired somewhere in her corset, to be greeted by cheering and rejoicing by all the family.

However, later that day my dear wife discovered her in her bedroom having taken off this very special and carefully constructed surgical corset, bending it across her knee.

Pauline was horrified. "What or earth are you doing, Mother?"

To which her mother cheerfully replied, "Don't worry, I'm only bending it to make it more comfortable!"

I now believe that my dear mother-in-law, in her gentle and amusing way, had unintentionally demonstrated to me a frustrating problem here in the West regarding the gospel, and discipleship. We seem to have a tendency to bend the teaching of the gospel and the discipline and cost linked to discipleship, in order to make the church more comfortable.

Approve or not, the Bible is absolutely clear that marriage is between one man and one woman for life, and that all sexual relations outside marriage are prohibited. Which includes, of course, adultery, fornication, promiscuity, incest ... as well as that over-hyped hot potato, homosexuality. To put it another way, this is a core doctrine that has to do with the nature of our humanity – of our creation – and that defines our relationship with God. It is not therefore negotiable, and those in leadership in the Church should refuse to be intimidated and should continue to uphold the Bible. As written. Not out of a spirit of condemnation for those who fall short of the ideal, but from a spirit of love that refuses to let the sinner go and strives always to help.

Redefining faith and airbrushing out the 'difficult' bits so as to win acceptance helps no one. Equally, trying to coerce and intimidate others into approving lifestyles in conflict with their faith can at best be only a pyrrhic victory, because it is reliant on silencing dissent. Advocates of the new Weltanschauung may

(continued next page)

Christianity - Comfortable and Reasonable? (...continued)

not be happy until they have rewritten and neutralized the doctrines they find hard – and who knows, they may succeed – but the cost will be the annihilation of freedom, and devastation of truth.

Voice for Justice UK January 2017

The habit to try make Christianity acceptable and respectable (and harmless) however, is really a form of appeasement, especially today to secularism – a *spiritual danegeld* that has weakened the impact of Christianity in this country for each and every area of life today:

Advertising	End times	Politics
Accountancy	Holy Spirit	Poverty.
Agriculture	Immigration	Prayer time
Authority	Israel	Science
Bible study	Law	Sexuality
Boy-girl relationships & courtship	Leadership	The Holy Spirit
Cost of being a follower of Jesus	Marriage	The Media
Crime & Punishment	Miracles	The Sabbath
Devil and all his wiles	Money,	Trendyness
Discipline	Murder and abortion	Work
Education		

Christianity was never meant to be some comfy malleable option that does not openly challenge society's priorities at all levels; an option where serious on-going discipleship and training is just for the few. Recalling the C.S. Lewis' quotation "*The church is the only organization that exists for the benefit of non-members*", one important challenge for us today is to search ourselves as to what comfort zones are we tempted to let stay in our own Christian service.

Our salvation cost our Saviour. There is a cost to following Him. There is a price to be paid.

"Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also." John 15:20 (NIV)

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

2 Corinthians 6:3-10

It cost Jesus' disciples. It cost those who brought the faith to these Isles. It cost our early and later reformers. It costs today's church leaders like Bishop Nazir Ali who have the courage to make a Biblical stand here in 21st century Britain as Secular Humanism and Islam seek to impose their vicious versions of morality on society, even using the very organisms of the state to impose their ideologies upon us.

According to The Pew Research Center, over 75% of the world's population lives in areas with severe religious restrictions (and many of these people are Christians). Also, according to the United States Department of State, Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors simply because of their belief in Jesus Christ.

Each month:

322 Christians are killed for their faith.

244 Churches and Christian properties are destroyed

772 forms of violence are committed against Christians such as beatings, abductions, rapes, arrests and imprisonments and forced marriages.

For almost 60 years, Open Doors has worked in the world's most oppressive countries, empowering

(continued next page)

Christianity - Comfortable and Reasonable? (...continued)

Christians who are persecuted for their beliefs. These believers stand strong, despite the many obstacles that they face. What are some of the things that we can we learn from their faith?

There is something about hardship that allows us to know God deeply. When times get really tough, we discover more about who God is and how He works. Christians who have endured persecution for their faith, know this well.

There are no easy answers for why God allows his followers to face suffering. However, the lives of persecuted Christians reveal that even when things look out of control believers can rest secure, knowing that God is still in control. He is able to give courage, peace and even joy to stand strong through the storm. It is through these storms that believers discover God's love in new and powerful ways.

Open Doors

"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." 2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV)

Then the crowd there turned on Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the proconsul; and Gallio showed no concern whatever. Acts 18:17 (NIV)

Origin of the English word 'Comfort'

Middle English (as a noun, in the senses 'strengthening, support, consolation'; as a verb, in the senses 'strengthen, give support, console'): from Old French confort (noun), conforter (verb), from late Latin confortare strengthen, from com- (expressing intensive force) + Latin fortis strong. The sense 'something producing physical ease' arose in the mid 17th century.

Oxford Dictionary

One problem with language is that it changes. Without realizing it, we can be misled into repeating phrases that have lost their original meaning. One example is the way the King James Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter." The seventeenth-century translators didn't envision a sympathetic ear. The Bayeux tapestry helps us comprehend what the word meant. This massive cloth was produced in France to commemorate the Norman invasion of Britain in 1066, and their victory at the Battle of Hastings.

It depicts one of Duke William's supporters prodding a reluctant Norman soldier into battle with the point of a spear in his rear. Underneath is the incisive comment that King William "comforteth his soldiers"!

The comfort the Holy Spirit brings is not an arm around us, but an empowering and equipping to mobilize us for battle. His anointing power isn't only for the healing of the broken-hearted, but also for the defeating the enemy. That power does make him a great "Comforter"—just not in the sense the word conveys today.



Clive Calver, *On the Front Line*

"The world needs a healthy and bold church!"

Lindsey Martin, *What is Truth?* Coplestone Methodist Church 26.2.17

Recovering our Christian identity

The main thing that needs to be done is to recover our sense of Christian identity as a nation. Multiculturalism has undermined our sense of identity and done untold damage to our society, not least through welcoming the influence of Islam. The Bible has provided the spiritual and moral foundations of our society in the past, and can do so again. This can only be achieved with an unashamed church that boldly proclaims the truth and is unafraid to criticise Islam.

We need to love all Muslims, be they nominal or radical. The most loving thing to do is to share with others the love of Christ. This will necessarily involve confidently critiquing the truth claims of Islam. Many Muslims are converting when effectively confronted with the reality of Islam and the truth of Christianity. We need to see a lot more of this.

The only effective response to radical Islam is radical Christianity. Reformation starts with individuals. Passionate prayer fuels public proclamation. We all need to be prayerful in private and courageously unashamed in public. Every one of us has a part to play in this battle. Will you play yours?

Tim Dieppe, *Christian Concern* 24.3.17



What does your Grandparenting look like?

Grandparenting looks different to many grandparents. In some cases, grandchildren live with their grandparents, some live near their grandparents and some live many miles away, even across the ocean. Our grandchildren's parents may be spiritually rebellious or neglectful of their spiritual lives, failing to make time to read God's Word, pray or regularly fellowship with other believers a part of their routine. However, even if our grandchildren's parents have a strong established Christian home, busy schedules, jobs, parenting and all the distractions of today's world conspire to distract or destroy the family.



Many grandparents have broken hearts because their precious grandchildren are not learning about the love of Jesus; some have been estranged from their grandchildren. Long distance grandparents find it difficult to be a part of the lives of their grandchildren. Although today we do have many more resources to connect with them than we did years ago. Today, resources such as Face time, Skype; cell phones, texting, email, videos and others can be used for grandparenting.

This past weekend I attended a women's conference the keynote speaker spoke on the subject of "Courage", courage to be a woman of God in the world we live in today from the first chapter of Joshua. Joshua was afraid when the Lord told him that Moses was dead and he was going to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. However, the Lord said, "Be strong and courageous, be careful to obey my law, do not turn from the right or left of it, meditate on it day and night. **Then you will be successful** ... Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:7-9)

Grandparents are often overwhelmed and discouraged about how to grandparent in today's ungodly culture. Just as Joshua was afraid when the Lord gave him the assignment to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land grandparents are struggling how to reach out to their grandchildren in our technological age. I believe these words to Joshua "Be courageous" applies to grandparents today who are struggling with grandparenting in a broken world.

I find there is a requirement in those verses for me to spend time in Good's Word, **be careful to obey God's Word, holding fast to the truth, and meditating on it.** If I am spending time with the Lord consistently I will be able to trust Him with the heavy burdens on my heart. I will be able to ask the Holy Spirit to make intercession when I don't know how to pray for the grandchild who is breaking my heart (see Romans 8:26). God's Word gives me courage, which comes from knowing God, trusting Him to work in the hearts of my grandchildren. I pray intentionally for my grandchildren to experience the reality of a relationship with Jesus and live the adventure of walking with Him.

I had to ask myself the following questions after hearing this message from Joshua. I hope you will ask yourself these questions also:

"Am I a courageous woman/man of God?"

"Am I a courageous Godly grandparent?"

"Do I nourish my spiritual life with God's Word consistently so I can nourish my grandchildren spiritually?"

"Do I pray intentionally for the spiritual well being of my grandchildren?"

"Do my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren see what it looks like to walk with Jesus from my life?"

Courageous Godly Grandparents will invest in their own spiritual life to be able to lead their grandchildren into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ.

By Lillian Penner, Prayer Coordinator,
Christian Grandparenting Network,
lpenner@christiangrandparenting.net



Announcing the Next Grandparents' Day of Prayer

The Power of United Prayer

It is a global reality that truth is under attack like never before in our schools, our political arenas, the marketplace, and even in our churches. Christianity is under assault, and parents and grandparents find themselves involved in a tug of war for the hearts and minds of their children. It is not easy for our grandchildren to navigate in a world hostile to truth in this post-Christian culture. Satan is relentless in his aggressive attack to desensitize our children to truth and righteousness.



This is a spiritual battle requiring spiritual weapons. Our grandchildren and their parents not only need our support, but they also need our earnest prayers. They need our united prayer, a genuine, unified prayer for our hope and dreams for the next generation to be realized. Jesus declared, "Again I say to you, that if two believers on earth agree [that is, are of one mind, in harmony] about anything that they ask [within the will of God], it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My name [meeting as My followers], I am there among them" (Matt. 18:19-20).

We believe the battle for the hearts and minds of our precious grandchildren and their parents can be won only by praying grandparents who sense the urgency and unite to do battle in prayer. In the past, united prayer has always bridged the gap between a great need and a great awakening! Our grandchildren and their parents urgently need our unified prayers. Let's be a community of grandparents uniting in prayer for our families.

Sam Storms writes in the current issue of the Decision magazine, "The problems we face are not political and cultural; at the core, they are spiritual . . . What we desperately need in today's out-of-control world are self-controlled, level-headed, mature sober-minded prayer warriors." Prayer is powerful! Today, it is the best weapon grandparents have to stand in the gap for the physical, emotional, and spiritual lives of our dear grandchildren.

For that reason Christian Grandparenting Network is asking **grandparents to unite in prayer** for their grandchildren and their parents. We have two ways that you can participate on our website **www.grandparentsdayofprayer.com**

Will you help us call grandparents to join in prayer on September 10th? This event could be in your church, in your home, in a retirement complex, or any meeting location you choose. CGN will provide step-by-step guidelines, resources, and online tools to help you create a successful event that will engage grandparents in prayer for your event.

If you realize the urgency for a Day of Prayer for our grandchildren and their parents, will you help us call grandparents to join in prayer on September 10th?

Check our website **<http://www.grandparentsdayofprayer.com>** for more information, testimonials, promotional materials and free downloads. Please contact me if you have any questions or need more information.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this event.

For additional information, contact CGN's Co-Prayer Directors
Lillian Penner, lpenner@christiangrandparenting.net
Sherry Schumann, sherry@christiangrandparenting.net

By Lillian Penner, Prayer Coordinator, Christian Grandparenting Network



Marriage at Work – 2. The Hope of Israel

By John Yates - posted 29 May 2013 - <http://cross-connect.net.au/marriage-at-work-2-the-hope-of-israel/>

Review

A level of depth and intimacy enters into work when we appreciate employment as a space where our Husband's gifts and graces can be revealed.¹ The difficulty of this task goes back to the failure [of] Adam and Eve to guard and grow God's presence in their working environment of Eden. As a punishment they and their descendants were cast into a world where labour involves hardship; "cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Gen 3:17-19 ESV).

Israel was called to illuminate the spheres of work and culture as places of divine glory and wisdom

The faithful creator God did not however abandon humanity to the futility of endless labour; he pioneers a way forward through a covenant with a nation chosen to reveal his light to the world. Israel was called to illuminate the spheres of work and culture as places of divine glory and wisdom.

The Bride of God at Work

The prophets make it clear that the LORD is the Husband of Israel who holds her in the tenderest affection, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown." (Jeremiah 2:1-2 ESV); "For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called." (Isaiah 54:5 ESV). The covenant between God and Israel was not some external legal arrangement to keep her in line but constituted a bond of loving marriage (Ezek 16:8). This has far reaching implications for how we understand the stipulations of the Mosaic Law.

The Law of Moses, particularly in relation to the spheres of work and culture, such as lending money, treatment of the poor and keeping the Sabbath, was an all-encompassing guide for the old covenant believer (Ex 20:8-11; Lev 25:25-28; Deut 23:19-20 etc.). The sacred-secular or Sunday-Monday divide as we know it today did not exist for Israel. All of life was to be expressly dedicated to God.

As a nation of priests and kings with a prophetic calling to reveal God's light to the nations Israel was a Bride whose laws for everyday life are a preparation for spiritual union with the LORD

As a nation of priests and kings with a prophetic calling to reveal God's light to the nations Israel was a Bride whose laws for everyday life are a preparation for spiritual union with the LORD (Ex 19:4-6). The Law was a spur to holiness and made possible the consummation of marital intercourse with God which took place in the Jerusalem Temple (Pss 27:4; 48:9; 65:4; 84:1, 10). Work and worship were integrated dimensions of what it meant to be the wife of Yahweh. This beautiful divine design was tragically never really achieved.

Playing the Harlot

From her earliest beginning Israel behaves more like a harlot than a faithful spouse. The Old Testament is peppered with references to covenant breaking in the going after foreign gods. "And the Lord said to Moses, "...this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them.'" (Deut 31:6 cf. Ezek 16; Hosea).

Israel's adultery was particularly acute in relation to the worship of Baal who was a fertility god believed responsible for the sending of rain (Hos 2:16).. The favour of Baal towards bountiful harvests was cultivated by sex with sacred cult

(continued next page)

¹ Unlike with a human husband, God's covenant relationship is unconditional and eternal.

² The Song of Solomon is a commentary on the marital relationship between Yahweh and Israel see: <http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2012/01/the-poetry-of-sex/peter-j-leithart> .

Marriage at Work – 2. The Hope of Israel (...continued)

prostitutes (Deut 23:7; Hos 4:10). Israel's idolatry is adultery not in some vague spiritual sense but because it involved abandoning God's laws relating to finance, poverty and the Sabbath; laws which were designed to reveal his love as a Husband for his people (Jer 3:1, 8; Ps 106:39; Isa 1:21; Ezek 16; 23; Amos 2:6; Zech 7:9-10).

Through her idolatries Israel wilfully became like the nations; admiring the wealth of the surrounding powers (Assyria, Babylon, Tyre) she took on their commercial attitudes to business, justice and rest. Her motivation was naked profit, "we will...make offerings to the queen of heaven ...For then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no disaster." (Jeremiah 44:17 ESV cf. 2 Ki 17:15; Ezek 20:32).

Boom turned to bust as a punishment on an unfaithful wife who had deserted her vocation of manifesting the glory of her Husband in all the realms of life and culture

Abandoning her intimacy with Yahweh meant that Israel prostituted the domains of work and culture for selfish personal interest. As a jealous Husband God poured out his anger upon the nation handing her over to the opposite of her worldly desires; famine, nakedness and the sword (Deut 32:21; Prov 78:58; Jer 7:1-34; Ezek 5:13etc.). Boom turned to bust as a punishment on an unfaithful wife who had deserted her vocation of manifesting the glory of her Husband in all the realms of life and culture.

The Hope of Israel

With time the prophets abandoned any expectation that Israel would turn back to the LORD as her first love under the normal conditions of life. They looked forward to the time of the End when by God's miraculous acts of power Israel will once again be a true wife; "You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." (Isaiah 62:4-5 ESV cf. 54:5; Hos 2:16).

At that End time God's goodness and justice will cover all the spheres of life and culture. Such a situation awaited the coming of the Messiah and a new covenant that imparts the power to live a consistent marital relationship to the glory and praise of God (Ps 72; Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-16; 31:31-34).

Unlike with a human husband, God's covenant relationship is unconditional and eternal.

The Song of Solomon is a commentary on the marital relationship between Yahweh and Israel see:

<http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2012/01/the-poetry-of-sex/peter-j-leithart>

Conclusion

The history of Israel is a poignant story of the pleas of a devoted Husband for his wife to return his constant affections. The Law and sacrificial system are not legalistic strictures to keep such a spouse in line, but instructions from a devoted partner aimed at promoting marital bliss in the whole of life. Abandoning God and his Law meant the prostituting of all the spheres of work and culture.

A spurned, offended and jealous Husband cannot passively stand by and watch the glory of Israel turn to public shame (Hos 2:16; 4:7). The final word of the Old Testament is not however one of wrath, but one of hope. This hope will crystallise with the coming of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and the rebirth of the people of God in the form of the Church.

The Church of Christ is called to enter work and culture as redeemed spheres of marital fellowship through which God can reveal his eternal purposes for humankind

Work as an expression of marriage will remain, but through a new covenant spiritual power will be released enabling a greater level of faithfulness. The Church of Christ is called to enter work and culture as redeemed spheres of marital fellowship through which God can reveal his eternal purposes for humankind.

[To be concluded...]



Have We Forgotten Something?

By Bjorn Schmid

I hope what I wrote last time was of benefit to you dear reader. Nothing I write here is to benefit myself, other than to force me to think deeply about my own commitment to Christ and how I measure up against what I'm writing. This time I'd like to go through Matthew chapter six with you - to me this part of scripture is very revealing of how we are to live our lives of prayer.

Ego Buster #4: Give unto God what is God's, privately

"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. [verses 1-2]"

This could hardly be more plain - expect any kind of recognition from men and you get nothing from God. Note that Christ does not say that if you receive a reward from men you will get nothing from God; He is talking about doing things to be *noticed* by other people. He also does not talk about any scale - no matter how small or large is your offering, if you expect recognition from men, God will not reward you for it.

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [verses 3-4]"

Why is this? Because you are trying to steal glory from God. Does this hurt Him - NO. Does this hurt you - YES. Everything is the Lord's and all glory belongs to Him, and as in Ego Buster #3 it is about living in genuine humility which God loves (ref. Pro 3:34, Jam 4:6, 1 Pet 5:5) and rewards.

Ego Buster #5: God hears your heart - big words don't impress Him

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [verses 5-6]"

Prayers are conversing with God. We use spoken words not only because it is how we are trained to communicate but because it is also how our maker brought the whole universe into being - *there is power* in the spoken word. However, we have no power over God - he is not like our earthly parents - no matter how loud or eloquent our prayers they are a 'resounding gong or a clanging cymbal' if they are not a genuine unselfish cry from our heart to our Father God (1 Cor 13:1, 1 Sam 16:7). God is not impressed by prayer wheels and other automated prayer mechanisms.

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. [verses 7-8]"

A father listens to his children even when they are very small and can hardly articulate what they want to say, but he understands their desires and tries his best to give what's good for them. Of course it makes it more pleasurable to him if the child says "I love you daddy!" and means it - not just for manipulation - it demonstrates maturity. Genuine appreciation from a little one who cannot hope to return the favour given of a new toy or a trip to the park is the least one can do but it means so much to a parent.

Thus Jesus gave us a simple recipe for humble prayer:

This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one' [verses 9-13]"

I heard a beautiful version of this prayer sung by an Australian First Nation woman a few weeks ago - it was a simple song but so beautiful in simplicity and sung with genuine love for God. "*This, then, is how you should pray...*" - not necessarily *what* but *how*. Acknowledge our Father God and His authority, praise Him, present your prayers and petitions, ask for forgiveness and intercede for forgiveness of others (a good way to learn how to forgive), and ask for protection from the enemy of God and the temptations of

(continued next page)

Have We Forgotten Something? (...continued)

the world. This is a rough summary of course and does not compare with the many good books and articles written on 'the Lord's Prayer' but *pray from your heart in your words*.

Ego Buster #6: To be forgiven we must forgive

Jesus also warns there is a caveat on God's forgiveness:

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. [verses 14-15]

Again this could not be more clear - we MUST forgive others or we will not be. When it is hard to forgive, ask the Holy Spirit to help you - you need Christ's love that took Him to Calvary and His power that raised Him from the dead. When you have this love and this power - there are no obstacles to forgiveness.

There are plenty of Christian and secular studies and writings on unforgiveness and the negative impact it has on you but suffice to say *it hurts you more than it hurts them*. There are many people I resented for years and it blocked my growth in and with Christ. By letting go and loving those who have 'transgressed against us' we release ourselves and drop some more of that baggage we are carrying around for no good reason. Read Psa 103 for inspiration.

Note though that there are still some people I choose not to trust in *particular* matters - I have forgiven their failings against me (as I perceive it), but because of their weakness I choose not to expose them to another opportunity to fail - this is for their benefit and not mine. Perhaps this sounds controlling or condescending, but I also hope that my brothers will be mindful of my own weakness and do the same for me. Consider an example of a person who has an addiction to alcohol - would you (if you do) consume alcoholic drinks in front of them or would you avoid exposing them as much as possible? We are all responsible for each other.

As always *keep the eternal perspective* and other people's (and our) failures in this temporary life are trivial in comparison. Ask yourself: "Does God want my brother/sister to go to Hell?" - read John 3:16 to confirm God's answer every time you're having doubts.

Love yourself too - don't block your own forgiveness and lose your own salvation because of someone else's sin, even if that someone is an ordained minister/clergy. I will cry if you're not there in Heaven because you couldn't pray for a sinner.

Ego Buster #7: Your fast is an offering that belongs to God alone

In this passage in Matthew our Lord goes on to talk about fasting - why? Because fasting is often required for spiritual breakthrough - it humbles our seen body and subjects it to our unseen mind, soul and spirit. *It also helps breakthrough when you are unable to forgive.*

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [verses 16-18]

Again Jesus is wanting us not to be vain in our fasting or it is worthless. Fasting of this kind is not a public activity - he is very specific "*only to your Father*".

The idea of public fasting comes from the Old Testament where *a king or prophet or some other anointed leader has the authority to call a public fast* (e.g. 1 Kin 21, 2 Chr 20, Ezr 8:21, Neh 9, Est 4:12-17). There is I believe a place for public fasting when say a Prime Minister asks his country to pray and fast, or a senior church leader asks his denomination to pray and fast - *they have the authority* to ask for this, and because it is asked of all there is no glory to be taken by any individual because they have fasted. As we are under grace, there should be no condemnation of those who do not fast - don't be like 'the accuser'.

Certainly the Old Testament has many sackcloth and ashes examples of personal fasting, yet Christ our King and High Priest is instructing us not to demonstrate when we are personally fasting but to "*put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting*". Radical.

Read through Isaiah 58 and contemplate.

More next edition. Grace and peace, Bjorn.



FUSION NEPAL NEWSLETTER

2/13/2017 (Volume: 7)



Dear Friends,

Hope this New year 2017 knock Ur door with full of blessing and God's Grace..! Also we hope You all have enjoyed a chance to have a break and a time of refreshing with Your family and friends. We also hope in this break time, You get to reflect God's words and ask God for Your Vision for this Year, and that you might commit Your life for Ministry work or to share the gospel overseas or you thought of helping the overseas ministry workers with Prayer or by providing resources...! You may ask how we thought of committing our Journey this year...? If so, then our answer is Luke 2:40 which we included in our Prayer Journal for this year 2017...! The verse says; "And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him."

In the beginning of the Year all is shiny with newness and hope, all I can say is : Lord, Please make me into the image of Jesus. Let me, too, grow and become strong. Let me be filled with wisdom. And please, pour out your Grace on me and the Fusion Work. This is all I could ever ask for or desire. I know this coming year will be full of joy and pain, success and failure-but in it all, let me reflect You First. Amen!

In this starting of the Year 2017, we also wanted to reflect our 2016 weaknesses' and Highlights and wanted to build Fusion Nepal work Further more in this year in our journey of building communities together with hope ...!

The year of 2016 was filled with lots of Blessed Journey for Fusion Nepal...! We've been able to put our regular activities like Kids Club (once a week), Day Trip (Once in three month with Youth Group), Festival (two time a Year) and Every day; "Fusion Learning Together Tuition class" for the children of the Katunje communities, who love to read...! Words cannot describe the way Fusion Nepal is getting Blessed Feedback from the Community leaders regarding our work, as we have committed ourselves for the sake of the Communities and the Community Kids and Youth...! We are Blessed as we invest our time, the fruit is growing as the eyes of our community members for seeing Christian people is changing and good to see they start welcoming Fusion Activities and see them helping Us by provid-ing the resources...! Isn't this so Exciting to see in our "Journey of building communities together with Hope".

The Journey of 2016 was very blessed, the first reason;"Fusion Nepal" was registered legally as an NGO in the Government of Nepal...! There we registered our organization by saying that Fusion Nepal will be committed in doing the following things for community development works...!

- 1) Fusion Nepal is non-profit and Social Service Organization.
- 2) Fusion Nepal will award the person and organization, who play important role in society for the sake of Children and Youth in social, educational and in health department...!
- 3) Fusion Nepal will help orphanage, disable and uneducated children by providing scholarship...!
- 4) Fusion Nepal will launch educational, religious, historical and health awareness seminar in different part of Nepal. ...!
- 5) Fusion Nepal will give counseling to Depression and Drugs addict Peoples in building communities together with Hope...!

The Next reason for being blessed; we have been able to Welcome; "Fusion 101 Course" (Discipleship and Leadership Class) in Nepal for Youth Leaders and Youth Pastors...! This had help Us not only to equip the Fusion co-team but also the Youth leaders and Pastors from different parts of Nepal...! Along

(continued next page)

FUSION NEPAL NEWSLETTER (...continued)

with this we visited different Churches and shared sermons and encouraged many Youths and Pastors with Fusion 2020 goals and inspired them in sharing How our Mission should be in building the Kingdom of Hope! We challenged many Youth throughout the course and share with them how beautiful we are and how beautifully we were created and what the purpose is of us being created...! Everybody was touched by the course and some of the Fusion Hindu Friends, who used to help run our regular activities committed their lives for Christ and Gave thanks to our Inspiring Trainers (John Latten, Perry and Kim Anderson). Don't You think after seeing all these things there will be a big Party in Heaven...?? The Team of David Herdon (Pilgrimage Team) helped the Fusion Nepal Team put their learning into Practice and Fusion Nepal had opportunities to share their Fusion 2020 goals to reach different Schools, Churches and many Youth, who have been thirsty for Pure water. Thankfully the Pilgrimage team has been able to become the source of water to many as they were waiting for love, hope and encouragement from the Fusion Ne-pal Team in many ways...! Together we had a very Blessed Journey in 2016 in Building communities "together with Hope and Prayer...!"

Fusion 101 Seminar (Discipleship and Leadership) Glimpse.



Behind all this success, there are many things that Fusion Nepal has failed to do or has struggled in a lot ...! Did You ever ask what kinds of struggles or challenges our brothers and sisters faced during the year...?? Most of the time, we love to hear only good news and good posts in Facebook. We only used to write back emails if we heard that something positive happened...!! We also used to message somebody if we need something from them or if we need them...!! Did we ever ask personally How they and their ministry are going, what are the needs of their work or even ask How We can Pray for them??

We receive many likes, comments and sharing in Facebook but would love people to ask how we are actually going ... or how we pray for you ... or what are the challenges and breakthroughs that happened? God made us to live in fellowship together, to care for and support each other. Please understand when I say that sometimes in Nepal we feel a little isolated and long for your authentic fellowship and community.

Fusion Nepal also thinks that sometimes they are not aware of how their own Fusion Nepal Voluntary Friends are going..! So, this year we thought of committing ourselves to care more for each other (Fusion Nepal Friends) and we will be focusing on building the Team by taking the Fusion 101 Course to both Christian and non-Christian Friends..! But for this we need lots of Prayer and resources...! Can we stand together with Fusion Nepal in growing the Team this year?? Because until now we haven't built up the team so we feel we are incomplete...! To grow the team of Fusion Nepal we need at least 3 to 4 Friends to work full time...! We all know that we haven't had any resources to pay our staff, Ruth herself is a faith worker...! This is the reason we have not been able to do more things in Nepal though we have many

Regular Fusion Learning Together Tuition Class in Katunje Communities....!



(continued next page)

FUSION NEPAL NEWSLETTER (...continued)

talented Friends. This is because we can't do our Study, jobs and Fusion work at the same time....!

Did You ask now, what is the best way for Fusion Nepal to build their team in the Future and what things would help Fusion Nepal grow as a team?? And what would be the goal of Fusion Nepal for the next few years or where Fusion Nepal sees themselves in the next few years..?

Our Answer and Prayer; now that Fusion Nepal is registered, we want to see ourselves having a Fusion Nepal Center in Bhaktapur with around 3 to 4 Full time workers...! We want to see Fusion Nepal having their own building, where there will be a big hall that will be used for the Fusion 101 Course for the Youth, the Free Learning Together Tuition class for Children and that the hall will be open for any churches or seminars to run a conference...!! In the same building we would love to see ourselves opening a Christian Guest House as we don't have any Christian guest houses in our locality. We would love to see our Fusion Trainers sitting in our own Fusion Nepal Guest House instead of paying many \$ at a hotel...! In our Experience, while running the Pilgrimage to Nepal, we used to pay more than \$10,000 for a hotel for two weeks...! Also, \$6-7000 for running the 5 day Foundation and 101 Fusion courses in a Hotel...! We have no idea how we can ever raise enough money to own a Fusion Nepal building which would allow us to run more pilgrimages and Fusion course, but it is something we are looking to God to provide. This will also help the Fusion Nepal Friends to have a job and use their talent for it...!

Most of the Fusion Nepal Friends that are in the government registration committee have a degree and are very qualified to be Teachers. Some of them are qualified cooks, some are qualified for teaching foreign languages, some as accountants and some as theological leaders...! So, if Fusion Nepal had our own building then we might be able to run a very good business, where we see ourselves being an independent organization. We also see ourselves opening a Fusion center in other parts of Nepal...! This seems to be very big dream for us for sure as now we don't even have one room to call a Fusion Nepal office...!! You might say that we are crazy, but I remember having quality times with one of my very close friends to whom I still call my spiritual Father...! He often used to encourage us by saying;

"The Bible invites us to have big dreams and a big faith because we have Heavenly Father who cares for us. The Bible encourages us to have vision about what might be when we are in God's will. Let's keep dreaming, praying, hoping and trusting that God will make it a reality, in his perfect time. Our hope is in him!"

Don't these sounds like great, inspirational words for thoughtfully caring for each other and helping each other to grow ...?

So, as Luke 2:40 says; At the start of the Year, all is shiny with newness and hope. All I can say is: Lord, Please make me into the image of Jesus. Let me, too, grow and become strong to dream of bigger things for the Future to build the Kingdom of God. Let me be filled with wisdom and please, pour out your Grace on me and the Fusion Work. This is all I could ever ask for or desire. I know this coming year will be full of joy and pain, success and failure-but in it all, let me reflect You First. Amen!

Kids Club in Katunje Communities....! (Weekly Fusion Nepal Activities....!)



Special Thanks Giving and Prayer

- Lets thanks God for His faithfulness throughout the Year 2016.
- We are very thankful to David Herdon, John Latten, Perry and Kim Anderson for bringing , Fusion 101 Course and Pilgrimage Programme in Nepal...!
- We are very thankful to our dearest Friends; Jack and Nagire for sharing their generous hearts in fixing our Fusion Tuition class Walls...!

(continued next page)

FUSION NEPAL NEWSLETTER (...continued)



Fusion 101 Class is started with Non-Christian Friends...!

- Please pray for all the participants of our last Fusion 101 trainings and seminars to apply the teaching in their life and ministries.
- Please Pray for Ruth and the team so that they could be able to give regularity in running the Fusion 101 Class to both their Christians and non-Christians Friends.
- The government make unexpected announcement that the degree exam will held on the end of the February. So, Plz Pray for Ruth and the Team as they will be preparing for Exams and will sit a weeks gap from Fusion Activities.
- As Fusion Nepal is register now, we are in needs of some official things; Printer, computers and Fusion Office room...! Please Pray that we could be able to find the resources to see it in reality...!
- Please pray that we could be able to put some full time workers for Fusion Nepal works.
- Ruth is thinking of doing one year Psychology course (post graduation) this year. It will help her doing counseling as after earthquake, many people are in depression. So, Plz pray for the Admission and Monthly fee that is needed to make this possible...!
- Please pray for the dream that we see of Fusion Nepal Building, which will help Us be an independent organization in Future.
- Please pray for Ruth for Her Faithfulness in leading the Fusion Nepal works....! Also Pray that she could be able to do the things in communities by acknowledging God Plans.
- Please pray for all the New annual plan and estimated budget and its effective implementation and provision.



Fusion Learning Together Tuition class wall shows the walls are currently tent and tin ... ! but will soon be completed with windows and solid walls.

(we are grateful for the generous heart of brother Jack and sister Ngaire)

FUNDING

All of your Prayer and Generous Hearts have always Blessed Us in many ways to keep our Fusion Nepal works, and we believe God has given us a vision for future direction ... but to succeed in upcoming year still appreciate your prayers and support. We are committed to fulfilling the vision from God, and we are grateful to those who support the vision with their cheerful and generous hearts. We know you will continue to stand with us as we remain both faithful and full of faith. Thank You!

Banking Details

Account No. : 018036889970100
 Account Holder: Fusion Nepal
 Bank Name: Sunrise Bank Ltd. Bhaktapur, Nepal
 Swift Code : SRBLNPKA

For Further Information (Fusion Nepal)

Email: Fusionnepal2016@gmail.com
 Blessedruth123@gmail.com
 Contact: +977-9843559938 /
 +977-9803020901

Thank you so much, dear friends, for always excitingly reading the next chapter of the Fusion Nepal Story !! and we know many more chapter are ahead of us! We will be there for sure, and we look forward to sharing details of our unfolding story in Future too..! please keep us in your prayers! Thanks for Everything Once Again!! (FUSION NEPAL FAMILY)



RICE SOWERS Fundraising Dinner

Over the 15 years that I have had the privilege of being involved in this Movement, it has been clear to me that an integral part of all the amazing things we have seen God do are **a result of partnership in the gospel**. The truth is, behind every teenager who has responded to the call to put their faith in Christ; every young person who has been renewed in their walk with the Lord and each leader who has been empowered to use their gifts for the kingdom through this ministry, stands a group of unnamed RICE Sowers who faithfully build a framework within which all this could happen. It has been a joy to see this partnership and I can't wait for the day, in the new creation, when these donors meet some of the fruit of their investment in lives that have been changed over all these years.

I'd like you to consider helping us by either being a RICE Sower yourself or inviting someone to come along with you to our third RICE Sowers event with the ex-deputy Prime Minister of Australia, John Anderson. You can find tickets and more information on our website ricemovement.org

At our first RICE Sowers event the then-Premier of NSW Mike Baird told us *'it is incredibly important we invest in our youth, and if we give our youth the light of the world, our job's pretty much done.'*

Blessings,
Steve Chong
Founder and Director

Sowers *

SATURDAY / OCTOBER 21

Location: St Barnabas Anglican Church
Address: 57-61 Mountain Street, Ultimo
NB: on-site underground parking available
Time: 6:30 PM
Dress: Formal
Book on-line at: <https://ricemovement.org/sowers>

RICE * MOVEMENT
RENEWAL & INTER-CHURCH EVANGELISM



Queensland
Theological College

www.qtc.edu.au

Training gospel-driven leaders for a challenging world.



PAUL TRIPP

August 17-19

A Dangerous Calling

Instruments in the
Redeemer's Hands

What did you expect?

CARL TRUEMAN

July 24

Luther: the man and his theology

