

Transforming Sydney & Prayer Strategy for the Spheres of Influence



This year, the Newsletter has a National & Global focus
and mission for the spheres of influence in Family, Church, and the Marketplace.

TRANSFORMING
SYDNEY

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Note: articles in this Newsletter 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.

In the December 2015 edition - focus on Sport and Recreation

♥ From the Convenor, From the Editor	2
♥ Noel Mitaxa; Australian Sports Ministry	3
♥ Anthony Kottaridis; What I think About Sport	4-5
♥ Michael Huggins; A Man Named Peter	6-8
♥ Steve Bagi; Are you carrying too many boxes?	9
♥ Cameron Butler; The Emerging Australian Reformation	10-11
♥ John Yates; The Heart of Unity	12-13
♥ Geoffrey Bullock; How Do We Disciple Nations?	14-18
♥ Simon Manchester; What is New Testament 'Prophecy'?	19
♥ Papua New Guinea Wold Mission; November 2015	20-21
♥ Lillian Penner; Finding Significance in God's Gift of Grandparenting	22-24
♥ Suzette Torti; Would You Bless Our Community and Our Nation Daily?	24
♥ Roy & Janet Funu; Hope For the World - Please Pray!	25
♥ Stephen Leslies; Recreation – the secret to sustainable ministry	26-27
♥ Jeff Camm; Do you put sport Before God?	27
♥ Nathan Ahearne; MCC Sporting Prayers	28-33
♥ Voice of the Martyrs; Serving the Persecuted Church	34

Prayer Calendar 2015

See the daily prayer points on the 2015 Prayer Calendar - www.transformingsydney.org/TSPrayerCalendar.html

(In the November newsletter is a Daily Prayer Calendar for December to pray for Sport & Recreation
- see also prayerstrategy.org)

Upcoming Events

25 December - Celebration of Christ's birth!

11-14 Feb 2016 - Global Forum for a World Without Orphans (Thailand, p5)

14 May 2016 - Pentecost Eve Prayer for Sydney (details TBA)

Newsletters in 2016

We pray these Newsletters are a blessing and a source of inspiration to you. It has certainly been an interesting journey starting with 4 pages in February 2014 to regularly over 30 pages every month.

From 2016, the Newsletter and monthly prayer calendar will be moving to the Prayer Strategy for the Spheres of Influence website (prayerstrategy.org) and will be under the banner of the PSSI alone. Events and articles through Transforming Sydney will continue to be published in the Newsletter, but it is our intent to detach this publication from Transforming Sydney in anticipation of new work for both movements.

As the saying goes - "Watch this space!"

From the Convenor

Christmas to me is a spiritual awakening for my soul. On the 25th of each December I feel renewed and transformed with the birth of Jesus. This is a Grace to be able to understand who I am and give thanks to God.

God has invested too much of himself in humankind to abandon the highest order of creation. He promised to provide humankind with the help needed to return to the relationship Adam and Eve had enjoyed before the Fall. And He the most High will keep his promises. He has kept every promise He ever made to humankind. When Christ entered our world, he didn't come to brighten our Decembers, but to transform our lives. Today at Christmas we remember the fact that Jesus entered our world in order to restore relationships-first our relationship with God and then our relationship with others.

Christ made a point of seeking out the broken and disenfranchised people of his day - the lepers, prostitutes and tax collectors - and he saw the value in each one of them. And in so doing, He helped them recognize the value in themselves. This Christmas season, let us recognize that just as faith is a decision, good will towards people is a series of decisions that work themselves out not in temporary holiday cheer, but in the details of everyday life.

At Christmas, we celebrate the beginning of the mission Christ will complete at the Second Coming - to free us from our dependence upon this world; to secure eternal life for each and every believer through his work on our behalf. "In this world you will have tribulation," Jesus said. "But take heart - I have overcome the world!" (Jn 16:32-33)

A Thousand Years Are Like A Day

Having first of all the knowledge that in the last days there will be men who, ruled by their evil desires, will make sport of holy things, Saying, Where is the hope of his coming? From the death of the fathers till now everything has gone on as it was from the making of the world. (2Pe 3:3-4)

But the present heaven and the present earth have been kept for destruction by fire, which is waiting for them on the day of the judging and destruction of evil But, my loved ones, keep in mind this one thing, that with the Lord one day is the same as a thousand years, and a thousand years are no more than one day. (2Pe 3:7 -8)

Jesus said, "No one knows that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (cf. Mat 24:36)

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE.

Lilian Schmid

www.prayerstrategy.org

www.businesswomenhealingministry.org

www.transformingsydney.org

From the Editor

The miracle of Christ's incarnation is repeated every time someone surrenders their life to Him and asks for Him to take over their life.

Christ, the Hope of Glory, is born in us.

Having recognised that Christ, the Son of the Most High, has brought the Kingdom of God down to Earth, we invite Him to also establish His Kingdom within us (Luke 17:20-21), to give us a heart of flesh and blood and to write His laws upon it (Ezekiel 36:26-27, Jer 31:33-34, also Heb 8).

This is Kingdom - when we're totally subject to absolute rule of the King - everything we own is His, including our lives and the lives of our families. So will we allow the Baby Jesus to grow in us or are we happy to keep Him a 'baby' in our lives?

Should we not feed the 'baby' with food of the Spirit (John 4:32)? Should we not spend time with Him so that life with and in Him increases in us and the life we thought we had before decreases (John 3:30), maturing past our salvation and Spirit in-filling experiences to a deep and close relationship with the King? Paul the Apostle pleads with the churches in his letters - mature! Come into the fullness and maturity of Christ.

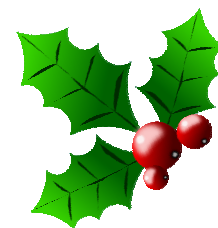
We pray for: Revival! Signs! Miracles! Harvest! But unless the Baby Christ in us is allowed to mature, we deny Christ the King and reduce Him to a symbol and songs - how can we be effective?

I pray the Peace of our King and Lord Jesus Christ be with you all over the holiday season.

Bjorn Schmid

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his
shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government
and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.*

Isaiah 9 :6-7



Australian Sports Ministry

Australian sports ministry has shown God's sovereignty in linking two unlikely partners: our national sports passion and our cultural ambivalence towards religion and authority. Unlike US immigrants, who dreamed of freedom of religion, our early settlers almost desired freedom from religion; unless religion could prove its value or credibility. However in 1984, our top sports associations began to realise that chaplaincy had credibility after Revd Mark Tronson became Australian Test cricket chaplain.

Sports chaplaincy has since grown to having over 400 chaplains serving across Australia, in the following sports organizations: Australia Institute of Sport in Canberra and all state sports academies or institutes; Australian Rules football, Rugby Union, Rugby League and Soccer; Equestrian sports, Basketball, Netball; Skiing, Tennis, Baseball, Cricket, Motor Racing, Surfing and Life Saving

However the challenges and the opportunities keep growing; for local sports associations are also seeking chaplaincy. This is because retired elite-level players are now local-level coaches and administrators, and having already seen how having a chaplain has helped them at top-level. The Victorian Country Football League has requested chaplains for all of its 880 clubs, and the Confederation of Australian Motor Sports has indicated its desire to have chaplains serving at their 500 racetracks around the country.

This opens the door for local pastors and churches, for an average sports chaplain has a pastoral care reach of approximately 500 people: for members and for their extended family, thus providing substantial and strategic reach for God's grace and mercy.

With a chaplain providing voluntary pastoral care in every club in Australian region or city, local churches would be actively reaching 75 per cent of our population; for ABS research in 2003 revealed that each week over 30 per cent of Australians take part in organized sport, with most involved twice weekly; compared to church attendance at less than 10 percent across all Christian denominations—per month!

SCA is challenging the Australian Church to reconsider

what it means to shepherd a flock; to rediscover the flock as not simply traditional church members, but also the wider community or crowd which has no shepherd (Mark 6:34).

SCA articulates its vision, mission and day-to-day activities by focusing on four key activities under ITAG: Identify, Train, Appoint and Guide.

SCA chaplains are commissioned by their local church and serve their sports community without discrimination. When asked about other faiths, SCA is quick to respond that chaplains pastorally care for everyone in their community regardless of religion, belief (or non-belief), ethnicity, gender, age or lifestyle. Any requests by people of other faiths which chaplains are unable or ill-equipped to respond to are referred to the appropriate person, be it an imam, rabbi, priest, psychologist or other faith specialist.

One concern will be pressure to license the role of the chaplain. Governments and stakeholder organizations, including some religious denominations, may seek to institutionalize chaplaincy in sport. However, the power of a servant-leadership model (unpaid, non-commercial, volunteer) and attention to keeping Jesus Christ and his grace and mercy at the centre of the mission will lessen the opportunity for these groups to control outcomes.

More exciting will be the complementary opportunities which are likely to emerge are in training, consultancy and professional services to sports bodies and communities in Australia. To date, many chaplains have served at numerous major sporting events like the Sydney Olympics, the 2001 World Masters Games, the 2003 Rugby World Cup, the Melbourne Commonwealth Games; and regional carnivals and regattas are also set to grow. However the greatest potential outcome in our growth still remains the countless lives and communities who will tangibly come to know the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ through ordinary people serving as chaplains.

We welcome your prayer as we continue to reach into Australia's cultural heartland with God's love.

God bless,
Noel Mitaxa

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)

What I think About Sport

By Anthony Kottaridis, MTh

Two years ago I was in the city reading on a bench in the park. A schoolgirl from Korea approached me and began to ask a series of questions. Flustered and annoyed, I answered as civilly as I was able, a recording device impolitely thrust at my mouth. The questions concerned sport. In ardent but admittedly awful English, she asked me three things about sport, probably to appease some project for her school back in the upper hemisphere. The park was packed with travellers and tourists, talking, laughing, chewing, pointing, spitting, digging through ridiculously big backpacks and attempting to placate their squealing infants as they squirmed about beneath the fig trees. Here, more or less, is the script of what transpired:

GIRL: (*accent not included*). What would you say is the most popular sport in Australia?

ME: (feeling as if I were on trial). There's a few. Rugby is massive – AFL's huge in Victoria, but overall I'd say cricket is probably the, uh, most – the most prominent. You know. Yeah. But, um, Australians are, heh, obsessed with sport – they'll play or watch anything. They're –

GIRL: In my country, South Korea, the most popular sport is soccer. And – what is the rules for cricket?

ME: (*utterly off guard and attempting to think back to my grass-stained-shorts-primary school days, for I didn't really know anything about cricket*). Well, there's, uh, there's two teams and, uh, there's a batter, a bowler, a wicket keeper and fielders and, heh, you know, they, uh – (*slowly recollecting*) the bowler throws – bowls a ball and the batsman has to, you know –

GIRL: Like a homerun?

ME: Yeah! (*Not strictly agreeing, but glad of the encouragement*). Yeah, and the fielders try to catch the ball and if they do the batsman is out and has to be replaced and –

GIRL: (*taking no heed of my discomfort*). And how does the scoring work?

ME: Well...there's, uh, there's something called 'runs' and... (*Here I shrug and sheepishly admit my unfamiliarity with the sport*).

GIRL: (*feeling not the slightest sympathy*.) And what is your favourite sport?

ME: Oh...probably tennis. I don't play it, but I like to watch it.

GIRL: And who is your favourite sportsperson?

ME: (*I smile*) Roger Federer. (*I get the feeling that she regards me as somewhat treacherous for choosing a Swiss person above an Australian*).

GIRL: And why do you think people play sport?

ME: (*unprepared for such a metaphysical question, I think a moment before responding*). Well, human beings have always been competitive. Sport is a safe and fun and, you know, ideal way for humans to compete with each other. (*I feel like an alien in discussing my fellow creatures as 'humans'*).

GIRL: Okay, thanks. Bye. (*She re-joins her giggling classmates and vanishes amid the throng*).

Now all through this interview I barely knew what I was talking about. But I had intrigued myself in the final question. Was that truly why sport was popular? Undoubtedly, my answer sounded like one of those insufferably 'proper' definitions you find in textbooks, but it got me thinking all the same.

I have played numerous matches in several species of sport, recollecting the primal aura that grows upon the field, the unwritten rules that you have to learn, the taste of blood about your teeth, the thrill of triumph, the disaster of defeat.

I don't play sport. I exhibited some skill in soccer in my early teens, but never followed through with it because I was ashamed to reveal my sickeningly skinny body, which refused to accumulate weight due to a rapid metabolism. But I have played numerous matches in several species of sport, recollecting the primal aura that grows upon the field, the unwritten rules that you have to learn,

the taste of blood about your teeth, the thrill of triumph, the disaster of defeat. These things I knew from experience. Now, as a Christian, I naturally put the issue in a Biblical perspective. What does God think about sport and recreation? Not much, apparently. There is absolutely nothing about sport in the entire Bible. Yes, Paul uses sport-like analogies here and there, but it is purely in a theological sense. One of these sport-like analogies even seems hostile towards it, namely 1 Cor. 9:25 where Paul writes, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable." A perishable wreath! A fleeting victory, a medal that will one day melt into the earth. Not exactly flattering to the sporting professions.

But here we have to remember something. There was no such thing as a 'sporting profession' in ancient times – not one that would be recognisable by modern eyes. For

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What I think About Sport (...continued)

thousands of years the majority of people in Egypt or China or anywhere else were poor peasants or nomads or hunter-gatherers, too concerned with survival to kick a ball about. The sport that did exist was entirely religious in nature. Whether it was the Greek Olympics (in honour of Zeus) or the Roman circuses (in honour of the deified Emperor), sport was a religious activity. The same is true around the world, whether it be the martial arts of East Asia, or the Mayan ball game wherein the losing team would be sacrificed, or the mysterious bull leaping ritual-game of the Minoans of Crete, all sport had religious ties, as did everything else.

Early Christians were repelled by sport because of its roots in paganism. The Church Father Tertullian attacks sport wherever he can because of this. But this is the 21st century. Things have changed – for good and bad. Charles Dickens' description of one epoch as being both 'the best of the times and the worst of times' applies to every era. Our world is glorified with technology, which makes slugs out of industrious minds. We have elevators, cars, jets and bullet trains – but everyone is running late. We pride ourselves on our pacifism, but our films are filled with violence and crime. The same goes for sport. It is now freed from religious ties – but it has become a sort of religion itself.

Yet religious or secular – all sport consists of sportsmen and sportswomen. In other words, it has to do with human beings, as I unconsciously blurted out to the girl from Korea. And the Bible has plenty to say about

human beings. And there is something truly wondrous about how sport and recreation brings people together in a way that work could never do.

Leisure is one of the best things about modern life. We study and work and struggle – but we do have occasional escapes, even if it is only two days at the end of the week. That is far more than our unhappy ancestors could have asked for. In these moments we can reflect and think and dream. We can play. We can engage in sports or view them from afar, which is certainly a blessing. Sport inspires human beings to excel, to strive. It promotes good health and the concept of 'sportsmanship', the idea of fair play, of being humble in victory and honourable in defeat. None of these things run contrary to Christianity. Sport could teach politicians a thing or two. How many hundreds of millions of lives would have been saved if international conflicts were resolved with an inflated ball instead of automatic weapons?

Recreation is perhaps the finest achievement of modern humanity.

Millennia of slaving away and premature deaths and uncomfortable squalor and violent massacres and famine and plague – all so the people of Europe, and then the world, could abolish the feudal system and have a bit of spare time to enjoy themselves.

People often pray for success and breakthroughs in their work and businesses. Pray for recreation! Do not live to work, work to live. No child goes into raptures over the size of your desk – but they will never forget the hours spent playing catch on the grass in the sun.

We pride ourselves on our pacifism, but our films are filled with violence and crime. The same goes for sport. It is now freed from religious ties – but it has become a sort of religion itself.

SAVE THE DATE

GLOBAL FORUM

FOR A WORLD WITHOUT ORPHANS



FEB 11-14, 2016

CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

A Man Named Peter

By Michael Huggins

The main TEE¹ Consultation had ended. Zafar and myself had arranged to spend an extra and undisturbed week in Pakistan to prepare the important follow-up work. But meanwhile there was the Seminary Board meeting to attend - and we were about to be disturbed. During the working lunch a figure entered the room, silhouetted against the light. I presumed the visitor was our Mongolian colleague, Magnus, and immediately left the table to welcome him, only to find a Chinese stranger. He smiled, and made for the library, where Zafar joined him. I assumed him to be a visiting TEE tutor.

Within a few minutes Zafar, who had to return to the meeting, asked me to go to the library and talk with our visitor. Our visitor was a Muslim, but seemed to be asking questions about the Bible. Would I get to know him [to] assess whether he was genuine or a “plant”. Wei Shu Lam² had but 40 days of English language learning behind him plus a remarkable pocket computer that could translate several languages to and from the Chinese script - it could even speak. Gradually the two of us were able to develop a system of communication. Zafar was right; our visitor wanted to learn about the Christian Bible, about Christianity. A year ago he had set out on a pilgrimage from Southern China to seek God. His passport bore witness to many countries visited. He studied the Qur’an at an Islamic School in Egypt, and became a Muslim. But not only was Islam incapable of satisfying that emptiness, that deep longing, in his heart and head, but he found a violence and anger in its teaching that greatly disturbed him.

He looked with longing at my old Bible and lit up like a candle when I told him that there were translations in both Chinese Scripts. He begged me to explain the Bible to him. Struggling with English, my Bible and his computer, I sought to explain that, unlike the Qur’an, the Bible was a library of 66 books inspired by God’s Holy Spirit, yet written over a period of over 1500 years by some 40 authors, in two main languages, Hebrew and Greek. The Bible told of God’s love in Creation, man’s disobedience to God, yet how God’s love and mercy shone through in His promise and its fulfilment of a Saviour, Jesus Christ, how Jesus paid the price for our sin on the cross, conquering sin and death through his own death and resurrection. How the whole Bible pointed to Christ. I was prepared for long debates and quotations from the Qur’an in return. Quite the opposite happened, for he had a child-like longing to study this Bible. He kept asking if a Bible college in Pakistan would allow him to enrol as a student for two years!

I wanted to be certain that he really did understand. I had become more and more convinced that he was genuine.

I was prepared for long debates and quotations from the Qur’an in return. Quite the opposite happened...

Zafar put my mind at rest when he returned, he quickly recognised the gentle spirit of our friend. But others needed convincing before introducing him to a local Christian community. I was not sure if we could find a Chinese Bible locally, but I had given Chinese Script editions of SEAN’s³ “Abundant Life” (the 18 lesson TEE course for new believers) and “Abundant Light”, (a TEE course to properly ground new believers into the Bible) to Magnus to help his work with Chinese communities in Ulaambaater. I was able to extract these books from that veritable yet kindly descendant of Genghis Khan when he rejoined our little company. He too was totally convinced that Lam was a genuine seeker. I think Lam spent all Saturday evening and night devouring these books.

I had promised to take Magnus to the international church the following morning; its services are held in English and only a 10 minute walk away. As we were leaving, Lam rushed out of his room and appeared to be asking me for some water. I took him to the kitchen and showed him the boiled water containers for drinking purposes. But no, this was not what he meant. Out came the little computer and suddenly two words “Baptism, Baptism” spoke out of it. I signalled that I would quickly return and took Magnus to the building where the International church met, pointing to

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¹ TEE - Theological Education by Extension—see <http://oxenministries.com/id7.html> for a detailed explanation

² Please note, for security reasons names have been changed, including that of Wei Shu Lam. Even so, please do not re-publish this without consulting me.

³ SEAN - Seminary Education for All Nations ; an international foundation dedicated to writing courses for TEE - see <http://www.seaninternational.com/>

A Man Named Peter (...continued)

the entrance. I forgot that I have a bent index finger, and Magnus, faithfully following the line he saw it pointing to, ended up in the next-door Urdu-speaking service.

A few years earlier I had been involved with the Chinese Church Support Ministries in the production of the Chinese Simplified Script edition of SEAN's "Abundant Life", and was responsible for its Chinese cartoons. SEAN courses are very evangelistic, so new believers are shown how to share their own faith through an evangelistic leaflet "How can I get to know God?" that is attached to the text. This is also repeated in many of their other courses. My English edition of Abundant Life was by now with Richard on its way to Jordan, so finding the leaflet in the Chinese edition, we went through it slowly and carefully together, including its prayer. Communication was still not easy, and sometimes we had to ask each other again and again to clarify. By pretending to cut his hand as if to draw blood, Lam, graphically explained that he had been washed clean by the Blood of Jesus. He wanted to be baptised as a sign of this new birth. Making a dramatic sign of a cut throat, he demonstrated what had happened to his old life. He asked if he could be baptised before Zafar and I returned to England.

Zafar returned the next day and we discussed what to do. Lam not only wanted to be baptised, he wanted to study his new faith and take it back to China with him. We needed wisdom. The best was that a local church accept and disciple him. The problem was that we were in a country where Christian minorities are barely tolerated, and given dhimmi status. A Christian is allowed to become a Muslim, but the reverse can be treated as a serious offence. Harsh retribution can be poured on Christian communities who help such new converts, including severe beatings and the violation of their women. The "away colours" of Islam are different to those worn at home.

Lam had approached a mission society before coming to us, but their misunderstanding of an answer he gave to one of their questions (remember he was struggling with English) resulted in their warning local church leaders that he was likely to be an impostor. This misunderstanding had to be cleared up.

Zafar and I were having to constantly travel to various appointments. Zafar had insisted that Lam have his quest room, so Lam was left to study on his own for long periods of time. On the Monday time was set apart to go through the "Abundant Life" lesson on Baptism with Lam. We had an unexpected yet most welcome help through Nasaar, a TEE tutor, who had joined us for lunch. Nasaar is a worker at the seminary. A man of humble background, yet of deep faith; whose wife is one of the happiest and most joyful Christian ladies I have ever met.

Western Theology rarely touches in any depth the Biblical doctrines of "persecution and suffering", something very real in the East. SEAN was not written in the West, and it prepares new believers for such eventualities

Picture us, Lam on my left with the Chinese edition, Nasaar on my right with the Urdu edition (which I re-illustrated last year), and myself, in the middle, with an English Bible, trying to do this lesson together. Nasaar can speak some English, but, in his faithfulness in his training for service to God, he knows his Urdu "Abundant Life" backwards and how to tutor it properly. In seeking to underline a teaching or find another example, he could quickly point to study frames and Biblical texts in the course. But it was not just baptism we studied together. During the TEE consultation, delegates from the East had pointed out that Western Theology rarely touches in any depth the Biblical doctrines of "persecution and suffering", something very real in the less-comfortable East. However, SEAN was not written in the West, and it wisely prepares new believers for such eventualities in "Abundant Life". Lam was happy to accept the probability of suffering and persecution in his goal to return to China to share his new faith.

Meanwhile, a local Chinese Christian, a leading businessmen, agreed, on behalf of the local Christian community, to interview Lam with us. We met in a restaurant. There are over 100 languages spoken in China. Lam was fluent in 5, but not the language spoken by our friend. A second Chinese Christian was found who served as an interpreter. Lam was really grilled. They had to be sure of him. Every stamp on his passport was questioned, as was his means of financial support. He answers were translated back to us in Urdu and then English. The businessman eventually was completely satisfied that Lam was genuine.

The next concern was that Lam operated totally within the law. Lam's visa had been extended until the end of December, and could possibly be again renewed, but it was a tourist visa, not a work or student's visa. He would

By pretending to cut his hand as if to draw blood, Lam, graphically explained that he had been washed clean by the Blood of Jesus. He wanted to be baptised as a sign of this new birth.

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A Man Named Peter (...continued)

have to have a very good working knowledge of either Urdu or English to study at a local Bible College. But, even if he could reach such standards, to apply for a student visa he would need a letter from the Chinese embassy of support. Lam was happy to go to the embassy to ask for such, but, with our knowledge of renewed persecution of Christians in a number of Chinese provinces, we did not think that wise. We eventually agreed to find someone within the churches who would happily disciple Lam, whilst I used my Chinese contacts to obtain a Chinese Bible and devotional material in the Simplified Script. A Chinese Bible had been given [to] him from the local Bible Society centre, but it was in the old classical script, no longer used in China, like giving a convert here a Coverdale version. But Lam was pleased to have it.

A Chinese Bible had been given to him but it was in the old classical script, no longer used in China

Acceptance of Lam grew. One of the first being a local Pastor who happily agreed to baptise him on our last night. Lam was overjoyed at the prospect, but he had one further request. With the use of the little computer he explained. Would I give him a Christian name? I went away to pray. A scripture and a name came clearly. I took the text to Zafar; it was Matthew 16:15-18. “...and I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Zafar heartily agreed that this was the right name, so we took the text to Lam, carefully allowing him to translate for himself. He was thrilled. He kept stamping on the stone floor to emphasis “the rock”. He asked me to write his name in his Classical script Bible, then copied the name time and time again on a piece of paper, saying to himself, “I am Peter, I am Peter, I am Peter..”

That night at about 12.30am Peter, having given a public confession of his faith before some 12 witnesses, went down into the waters of Baptism (the hostel bath tub). I shall never forget the look of joy that was on his face. We sang together the hymn “*I have decided to follow Jesus...no turning back, no turning back though none go with me, I still will follow, no turning back, no turning back....*”

Four hours later I woke him up to say goodbye. I had to leave to catch my plane. Zafar stayed on an extra day to ensure that Peter had a place to stay and someone to disciple him. Peter stays in my thoughts and prayers. As soon as I reached the UK, I was able to locate and send him the Simplified Script Bible. I meditate often over what I have learned through this experience:

- Firstly, I am convinced that God’s Holy Spirit was at work and led Peter each step, and will continue to do so. New birth is a work of the Holy Spirit. I was so privileged to be there at that time, but, at best, as a spiritual midwife.
- Secondly, Matthew 18:1-5. Peter was a highly educated lawyer of 27. He could speak 5 Chinese languages and was well read in Chinese translations of the classics of many countries including Russia (Chekhov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky), France (Hugo, Dumas) and Great Britain (especially Shakespeare - he loved, as a lawyer, the one he translated back to me as “Venice Business”) - yet with all this learning he was happy to become “like a little child” in his hunger and search for God.
- Thirdly, Nasaar was extremely well equipped and prepared as an “ordinary” Christian, to share and nurture in the Gospel. That has to be the way forward for the Gospel to expand in the East, through the ordinary people of God - God’s partisans, God’s ants - but what about the West? In our concentration of highly trained pyramid leadership are we still in the dark ages over Christian discipleship? Do we really attempt to properly disciple, train, mobilise and equip our Nasaars to be the effective harvest workers that Jesus commands us to pray for in Matthew 9:35-38? **...what about the West? Do we really attempt to properly disciple, train, mobilise and equip our Nasaars to be the effective harvest workers that Jesus commands us to pray for in Matthew 9:35-38?**
- Fourthly, the reminder of the struggle of our Christian brothers and sisters have under Islam. They face a similar dilemma to the early church with St Paul in Acts 9. They long to welcome converts from Islam, yet, firstly face possible danger if the person is “a plant”, or the Muslim community get wind of what has happened, or the convert decides (often under heavy economic and social pressure) to return to Islam; and secondly, they face considerable responsibility before God as to how to care for such converts, often driven from their families and villages, an added economic burden to often poor churches. Five of the witnesses at Peter’s baptism were former Muslims.

Michael Huggins, Oct 1997



Are you carrying too many boxes?

Have you ever noticed that the stack just keeps getting higher? As one thing is crossed off the things-to-do list, it is often replaced by 10 more. The stack grows even faster if you are good at what you do, and get the job done well and on time.

At times, the load we carry can be too heavy. Through my work I meet many people who are struggling under the weight of things that they carry. There are simply too many responsibilities, tasks and expectations by others.

There are things that can be done to reduce the load, pressures and stress. There is little value in complaining about it from year to year.. **Take Action!**

Don't wait for someone to save you

Often we keep going, hoping that someone will notice, care and perhaps ride in to save us. In healthy organisations this might happen as your leaders notice and respond to your excessive work stresses. But nothing is likely to happen until you take charge and decide to act as it might not get on the agenda until you put it there.

Share your concerns with those who can make a difference

Often, others in our workplace will keep adding more boxes for us to carry. We might be really stressed but they won't know unless we communicate this effectively to those who have the ability to change things. Complaining to others who can't change your life may feel good, but it won't lead to any improvement in your situation.

Put some boxes down

Sometimes I ask people to list the main work, family and community responsibilities they are trying to fulfill. Once the list is made, it is obvious that some things need to go. Putting boxes down is not easy, as we may feel that we are letting others down and they might not understand. However, it's simple; to have less to carry means that you will need to put some things down.

Pick up new boxes carefully

Once you have plucked up the courage to put some boxes down, your life may feel more manageable. Congratulations but be careful, as this might not last long as there are always new requests waiting for you just around the corner. It is easy to end up with a new stack that is just as heavy. Only add it if it fits in with your priorities and if you can remove something else first.

As we approach the end of another full year:

What are the boxes that you should put down? Will you actually do this?

If you are not in a position to put boxes down, how can you build your strength and resilience so that they will be easier to carry?

"The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak" Hans Hofman

Steve Bagi : *Stronger Leaders and Teams*
Actuate Leadership
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The Emerging Australian Reformation

Rev. Cameron Butler

Churches Leadership Summit

Parliament Canberra July 2010

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you could see what I see.

I hope in the next few moments you may get a glimpse.

Today, Australia stands on the verge of the greatest and most sustainable reformation of Christian influence in our nation.

Not through theology, or modernisation. Nor through technology, or savvy marketing. But rather, through SPORT.

A reformation not based on the “priesthood of all believers”, although valid, but rather, on an emerging model, the “‘pastorhood’ of all believers”.

This reformation calls God’s people to pastor their community, not just their churches.

As with the reformation, this small but significant paradigm shift of seeing the community (not just the church) as the ‘flock’, ‘gone astray’, will impact our Australian way of life for many generations.

Today, there are no less than 3000 current opportunities to ‘pastor’ sports clubs in sports like Aussie Rules, Rugby League, Motor Sports, and other sports as diverse as Surf Lifesaving and Australia’s most deadly sport the sport of... ‘Lawn Bowls’.

Just last week I was invited to a meeting at the MCG by the CEO of Australia’s largest sporting league (the VCFL) and was invited to appoint

chaplains to their 800 plus clubs throughout country Victoria. Most of these clubs have joint partnerships with local netball clubs also needing chaplains.

Imagine the impact of the Gospel!

At the social heart of every country town is the local footy club. Life is done, business takes place, values are set and partners are made. And, today, in 2010, the sports industry is saying to God’s people... “We need chaplains.” Or, to you and me, pastors, pastoral carers who can bring the reality of the Kingdom; God’s grace and mercy to over 75% of Australians.

Imagine the impact of the Gospel with 1600 men and women serving Christ in clubs throughout country Victoria.

This story can be replicated in NSW, with AFLNSW requesting chaplains in all 300 clubs, SA and WA. And not just in Aussie Rules but in many other sports! The world surfing body (the ASP), after a years trial of chaplaincy agreed that they needed over 250 chaplains for their international regions. The Pony Clubs of NSW 40 regional managers unanimously agreed that they would encourage chaplains to their 280 clubs. And the list goes on.

...because of the emergence of this pressure to get life right in sports and sporting communities, and the associated social responsibilities, clubs aren’t coping. They are looking for help. They are looking for leadership.

At this point, may I suggest that Australians want to be ‘pastored’. Not that they would describe it that way. But they are asking for quality people who are skilled to help them navigate through life’s dark valleys.

Sport captures the Aussie imagination. Some have said our very soul as a young nation has been defined, not by the Battlefields of War but rather by the exploits at Lords. DH Lawrence said, ‘Australians play sport like their lives depend on it.’

Sport is intrinsic to ‘what we do’ (as Australians), ‘who we are’ (as Australians), and, today, ‘how’ we do life (as Australians).

And because of the emergence of this pressure to get life right in sports and sporting communities, and the associated social responsibilities, clubs aren’t coping. They are looking for help. They are looking for leadership.

Four years ago I was invited to speak at the National Sports and Mental Health Conference with other significant guests including Dawn Fraser and Hawthorn Football Club’s beloved President Mr Jeff Kennett. A State Sports Administrator stood and declared, “We are in crisis in our sport at the moment. Coaches are leaving [our sport] on mass.” He explained, “10 years ago coaches were expected to simply coach the technical

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The Emerging Australian Reformation (...continued)

side of football. But, today, coaches (the mums & dads) are not only expected to coach but be counsellors for their kids. Many of whom are dumping life's ills on them."

May I suggest at this point that the closest thing to a pastor for most young Australians is their local club coach. The closest thing to a church, or refuge from life's ills, for most Australians, is not the church, but rather their local sports club.

Sport is influential at so many levels.

In 2004 the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that 6.4 million Australians, or near on 30% of all Australians are involved in weekly organised sports, with a caveat, stating, "Most twice weekly"! In contrast, in recent Australian Church Life Surveys rate regular church attendance (once monthly) at 7-8%. A stark contrast!

So where do Australian do life? Most likely in a sports club; at the gym or on the track.

In fact, if every sports club in Australia had a chaplain the Gospel would reach around 75% of all Australians.

Strategically this is significant. No other demographic has the power to reach people like sport.

For if we, as God's people are to genuinely influence our generation, here in Australia, we must be prepared to change. Change our approach. Change our perspective. And respond to the need.

As one State Sports Administrator said recently (Who is not a Christian), "It makes real sense that Christianity can be seen around our clubs. After all that's what it's about isn't it?"

When I was a lad growing up in church I heard the message that God wasn't interested in sport. Now, as a man, I have discovered that actually

the opposite is true. God is vitally interested in sport. Because where people are God is interested.

My challenge to us here today is to pray and act.

- Pray for workers in the harvest field – become a pastor/shepherd to our community.

- To those with gifts in business, government and leadership to strategically empower this God-given opportunity
- To church leadership to release their pastoral staff and lay leaders as models to serve in their community at least 1 day a week

My prayer, as God's people, His church, that we may truly become influential. Influencing those who are influential, and influencing the uninfluenced: the 93% of Australians who have never experienced Christ's remarkable love for their lives – and yet desperate for someone to help them when life goes pear-shaped.

So, the 'Pastorhood of all Believers'? Are we all called to be shepherds in our community? I deeply think so. I hope that we might respond like Peter in John 21 when Christ challenged him to "Follow my example!"

What was that example? "Feed my sheep." "Tend my lambs." "Care for my flock." Who was the flock? Christ showed us it was his community (Mar 6).

As Aussies we have a divine opportunity to respond to the need in our nation and dream in our hearts by being bold, courageous and innovative.

May I conclude with a quote from Emerson, "Do not go where the path may lead, instead go where there is no path... and leave a trail."

if every sports club in Australia had a chaplain the Gospel would reach around 75% of all Australians ... if we, as God's people are to genuinely influence our generation ... we must be prepared to change. Change our approach. Change our perspective. And respond to the need.

Thank you.

Cameron Butler is the Chaplain of the Melbourne Football Club in the AFL and National Director of Sports Chaplaincy Australia (www.sportschaplaincy.com.au) the leading recognised body providing chaplains to high-performance, development and local sports throughout Australia. He serves as the Australian representative on the International Sports Coalition Serving The People of Sport Council and has been an ordained minister since 1992.



The Heart of Unity

Posted on 21/11/2005 by Dr. John Yates - <http://cross-connect.net.au/cry-mercy-2/>

Personal Matters

A number of circumstances lined up recently to bring the functionally divided state of the Church to my attention *once again*.

Firstly I was listening to a local pastor bemoaning the seeming inability of his fellow ministers to work together. Two days later I was in a prayer meeting where a speaker shared about a miraculous coming together of Perth Christians across the denominational spectrum to work in concert 45 years ago. We could all sense that there was a "spirit of unity" at that time we rarely see today.

Most significantly, something between these two incidents gave me a sense of a new word from the Lord. I was in a team meeting at our local church when the other ministers spoke of a recurring pattern. Church folk enthusiastically volunteer for a task then "don't turn up" on the day. A scripture immediately sprung to mind; "Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; *unite my heart to fear your name.*" and I could see a heart divided in two (Ps 86:11). Where the heart of an individual, congregation or city-Church is divided this is a sure sign of the absence of the fear of the Lord so that God's kingdom purposes are being frustrated.

One of the greatest needs in the Church today is the recovery of the biblical vision of the heart.

The Centre of it All

Reflecting upon the fragmentation of revivals in his own eighteenth century, pastor-theologian Jonathan Edwards turned to a core biblical text; "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." (Prov 4:23). Edwards correctly discerned that "heart" stands for the *generating centre of all our thoughts, choices and feelings*. If the "heart" is like the trunk of a tree, the branches are our mind, will and emotions. Everything flows from the heart; it is not merely the source of strong feelings!

Someone, for instance, may respond passionately to an appeal to participate in a church working bee but if there is no follow through then their "heart" was never in it. A united heart means a unified person coordinated in every aspect and action of being. A whole heart wisely guides a mature person away from evil and towards good (Eccl 8:5; Prov 9:10). Whoever fears God *from their heart* will shun division and work closely with others (Deut 10:12; 2 Chron 19:9).

The present apathy about a functionally divided Church is a sign that we have gone into cardiac arrest and need an electroconvulsive shock from the Spirit to revive us. The only way this can come is through a greater vision of God's heart seen in the cross.

Whoever fears God from their heart will shun division and work closely with others. The present apathy about a functionally divided Church is a sign that we have gone into cardiac arrest and need an electroconvulsive shock from the Spirit to revive us.

God's Broken Heart

The *glory of Jesus is in making visible the heart of his Father*. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father...No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is in the heart of the Father, he has made him known." (John 1:14, 18). The glorious heart of the Father is publicly displayed through Jesus'

signs and wonders but hidden to normal sight in the cross (John 2:11; 11:4, 40; 12:40). The revelation of the generating centre of God's inner being occurs in the place fallen humanity never seeks glory, suffering for others.

In great pain Jesus prays; "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again"... "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death... Yet not what I will, but what you will." (John 12:27-28; Mark 14:34, 36). The agonising alignment of the will of Jesus with the will of God is an agreement that means the

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The Heart of Unity (...continued)

Son in his frail humanity will take on the heart of the Father for lost humanity.

We have a glimpse of the dimensions of what this will cost Christ in the prelude to the Genesis Flood, “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great...and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil...And the LORD regretted that he had made man...and *his heart was filled with pain.*” (Gen 6: 5-6 cf. Ezek 11:19). The pain hidden inside the heart of God across the ages breaks out in full view on the cross; ““My God, my God why have you forsaken me”” (Mark 15:34). To be united with the pain-filled heart of God is the glory of Jesus where *his humanity reaches complete oneness with his Father* in love for us (Heb 5:7-8).

This explains his prayer; “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,” (John 17:22). Christ’s sacrificial love is the glory that binds our hearts together as one. This is not some abstract ideal for it becomes real in the heart-experience of forgiveness.

One Heart

Forgiveness unites our hearts to God’s undivided heart through connecting us with the cost to Father and Son of Jesus’ sacrifice for us (Luke 23:34). The apostles ministered in the power of this connection. When Peter preached at Pentecost his hearers “were cut the heart” and cried out in holy fear “what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37 cf. Heb 4:12-13). The will of his hearers was coming into alignment with the will of God through repentance and the receiving of forgiveness (2:38). As the Church lived in such all forgiving love they “were of one heart and soul...” (4:32 cf. Jer 32:39). As the grace of God’s heart uniting us to him is forgiveness (Heb 13:9), our hearts are bound together in forgiving each other in love. This explains why the exhortation to “put on love which binds everything together in perfect unity” is preceded by *the command, “Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”* (Col 3:13-14 cf.

Eph 4:32-5:1; 1 Pet 4:8). Contrary to popular practice a mature Church sustains extraordinary forgiving love by “walking in the fear of the Lord” (Acts 9:3). After all, Jesus warned that grace is lost “if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”” (Matt 18:34-35). To walk in holy fear is to refuse to receive the forgiving grace of God in vain (2 Cor 6:1). Such a Church “bears with one another in love” in order to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3).

Conclusion

The life of the Church is meant to be a response to God’s whole-hearted action in forgiving sinners at the cross. Where the gospel is proclaimed as a message of *full* forgiveness for those who cause God untold anguish the Word creates an undivided heart walking in the fear of God. This is Christian normality.

We however live in a Church with a divided heart expressed in divided words portraying a divided image to the world. This is the spiritual tragedy of our time. Jesus taught that only a Church visibly “one” in his “glory” can reveal his unity with the Father “so that the world might believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20ff.). What can we do to bridge the gap between Christ’s call and our own spirituality?

Confess that as individuals, congregations and city-Church we are dominated by an ungodly fear that flows from a divided heart breeding competition and distance between us. Recognise that only a sovereign divine visitation of the all-forgiving love which draws all things together in perfect harmony can heal our fractured hearts and make us whole (Col 3:14). Pray that in the light of the cross we might each have a revelation of the depths of the psalmist’s words; “LORD, if you kept a record of our sins, who, O Lord, could ever survive? 4 *But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared....unite my heart to fear your name*” (Pss. 130:3-4; 86:11 cf. Jer 33:18-19).

As the grace of God’s heart uniting us to him is forgiveness, our hearts are bound together in forgiving each other in love. Contrary to popular practice a mature Church sustains extraordinary forgiving love by “walking in the fear of the Lord”. Jesus warned that grace is lost “if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

HOW DO WE DISCIPLE NATIONS?

by Geoffrey Bullock, Queensland State Director, FamilyVoice Australia - fava.org.au

Introduction

There is a growing discussion about the meaning of the Great Commission command to ‘make disciples of all nations’. What that means determines the way we look at the mission of the Church and the priorities of every church’s ministry. This article looks at the context of the phrase as it is used in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20.

God Wants Every Individual to know Him

First, we need to understand that God wants everyone to know Him. Jeremiah 9:23-24 epitomises the many exhortations by God and others in the Old Testament to ‘know the Lord’: “...let him who boasts boast in this: that he understands and knows me...”

In Acts 17:27 Paul indicates that God designed the world so men would look for Him and find him, and that he ‘commands everyone everywhere to turn to him and change the way they think and act’ because he is going to judge everyone by Christ. Through Paul, God writes that He desires “all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1Timothy 2:4).

God wants ‘Nations’ to know Him

But God is not only interested in individuals knowing him. God also wants ‘nations’ to know Him. There are 58 OT references to God’s desire for all the nations of the earth to know Him.

The key thought is found in Genesis 12:3. Through Abraham, God will bring his blessing to all the ‘families’ of the earth. John Piper sums up thus: “*What we may conclude from the wording of Genesis 12:3 and its use in the New Testament, is that God’s purpose for the world is that the blessing of Abraham, namely, the salvation achieved through Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham, would reach to all the ethnic people groups of the world.*”

The Great Commission - (Matthew 28:19-20a):

I will limit my thoughts on the Great Commission mainly to two sections in verses 19-20a:

1. **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations;**
2. **Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you!**

1) ‘Go ... and make disciples of all nations’

What does it mean to ‘make disciples’?

In Jesus’ time, it was the function of a teacher to gather people around him and present his teaching in the hope of persuading them to follow him. Jesus used boats to address crowds on the beach. He gathered them into houses; he spoke to them in the hills; he drew crowds wherever he travelled. Those who followed him were called ‘disciples’.

To ‘disciple’ can mean: 1. ‘To be or become a disciple of someone (e.g. Joseph of Arimathea ‘had become a disciple of Jesus’ – Matthew 27:57); 2. To be instructed by someone (e.g. Mt 13:52 where scribes are ‘instructed in the kingdom of God’); 3. To make someone a disciple’ (e.g. Acts 14:21 where Paul ‘made many disciples’). The latter use seems to fit best in the Great Commission. The disciples of Jesus are to go and make disciples – and probably in the same way Jesus did.

What does ‘of all nations’ mean?

‘Nations’ is translated differently throughout the Bible. It can mean families; racially-defined people groups; language-defined people groups; clans; tribes; and politically-defined nations. It is also used frequently to indicate ‘Gentiles’ or ‘non-Jewish’ people.

John Piper has done an excellent summary of the use of the Bible words for ‘nations’ in his article ‘*The Supremacy of God Among all the Nations*’^[1]. He confirms that the use of ‘nations’ in Matthew 28:19 means all the people groups of the world – Jews and non-Jews. This idea is exemplified in Acts 2:5-11 where Jewish men and proselytes from many people groups – tribes, clans, races, languages and politically-defined nations – heard and responded to

God is not only interested in individuals knowing him. God also wants ‘nations’ to know Him

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HOW DO WE DISCIPLE NATIONS? (...continued)

Peter's message at Pentecost.

'Make disciples of all nations'

Putting the two main phrases together, there are several ways we can interpret this: 1. Make (individual) disciples out of all nations (people groups); 2. Make all nations (people groups) disciples of Jesus; 3. Teach all nations (people groups).

I think we can hang our hat on all three. A suitable paraphrase is thus: *'Make disciples out of and from all the people groups of the world.'* The end result of this venture leads to people *'from every nation, tribe, people and tongue'* (Rev 5:9 & 7:9-10) worshipping God forever.

Can we baptise nations?

A short word here about the clause: *'baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'*. Is it possible to 'baptise a nation' as a political entity? I don't think so. This clause fits the idea of individuals 'out of' people groups. However, I think it is also possible to baptise 'people groups' or the smaller units of ethnic and social solidarity as well as individuals. The following historical examples support that possibility.

Some models of 'making disciples out of all nations'

1. The Individual Model

It was commonplace in the early church to proclaim the message and invite people to find out more. Anyone who was interested committed to a form of catechism – teaching of the faith – over a period of time. At the end of the teaching period, the catechumen was offered the chance to be a follower of Christ by baptism (for example – The Ethiopian Eunuch – Acts 8:26-40).

2. The Family Model

When the Philippian gaoler repented (Acts 16:26-34), his whole household – family and servants – followed. This was the cultural expectation: the family group usually took on the faith of the father.

3. The Tribal Model

Also, the adoption of the faith often came to a people group through their local leader or leaders. Once the leader believed, the whole people group took on the faith. For example, the Celtic monk Boniface challenged the Germanic pagans of Hesse by chopping down their sacred oak tree. Because he wasn't struck by lightning, the people believed his message – though many continued their pagan rituals secretly. This pattern has been repeated many times in church history to good effect.

2) '... teaching them to observe all whatsoever I have commanded you.'

The Relationship between Discipling and Teaching

The Great Commission centres here on the teaching aspect of making disciples. We need to ask the question whether there is a time or content difference between the making of disciples and the teaching of them. Which comes first: the teaching or the discipling? Is it possible to disciple without proclamation – without content which begs thought and acceptance? If so, how do we disciple without imparting knowledge of the object of faith of some kind? It's really a rhetorical question, because **teaching about the faith is the content of the discipling process.**

We need to ask the question ... Which comes first: the teaching or the discipling?

It makes sense to think that Jesus is saying: *'Here's the task I am setting you: make disciples out of every known people group in the world by baptising and teaching them all I taught you'*

That raises some questions: **'What should we teach?'** **'Is there any special message that people need to hear?'** **'What determines the teaching we bring?'** In answer to these questions, I strongly suggest that **in our discipling, we start with foundational Christian teaching that is relevant to the hearers. Let me explain why I believe that.**

The Example of Jesus

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HOW DO WE DISCIPLE NATIONS? (...continued)

Jesus' proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom (Mark 1:14-15). The good news of the Kingdom was centred on the fulfilment of God's promises to bless the earth's people and restore 'that which was lost' (Luke 19:10): their understanding of and relationship with the God they worshipped.

The Sermon on the Mount was among the first of his teachings (Matthew 5-7). In this, Jesus calls his hearers to understand the true nature of God. He wanted them to treasure God's rule in their lives (Matthew 6:33). The constant refrain of Jesus 'you have heard it said ... but I say to you' indicates that he was endeavouring to explain the law of God in the way it was meant to be understood.

For Jesus and his hearers, this was the Good News. The Gospel was the Good News of a new relationship with God through His Son Jesus the Christ. They needed to hear anew the reality of the God who had been obscured by man-made laws.

The example of Paul

In Acts 17:22-31, Paul proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus and the coming judgement. He first made sure his message was relevant to his hearers by asserting that the 'Unknown God' they worshipped was indeed the Creator of the world to whom we are responsible to obey. The teaching continued later with who wanted to hear more, and the fuller picture of what their 'Unknown God' has done would have been expounded then.

Conclusion

From these examples we can state some principles in response to the questions above:

- **What should we teach?** The Good News about what God has done in Jesus the Messiah!
- **Is there any special message that people need to hear?** Yes – God's plan for the world!
- **What determines the teaching we bring?** Whatever is relevant to their understanding!

I strongly suggest that there is no difference between all aspects of the teaching content of the good news about Jesus. To proclaim the good news is to bring the 'whole counsel of God' to bear (Acts 20:27). The order of that teaching depends on the relevance to the hearers. All that we proclaim should be towards taking on belief in the Lordship of God in His Son Jesus Christ, and this has ramifications in 'discipling nations' today.

How do we disciple the 'nations' today?

To summarise: **any proclamation of the will, nature and purposes of God for the world should be regarded as part of the discipling process. Those parts that are relevant to the different hearers must be considered foundational.**

How do we 'disciple' Australia today?

In Australia today, we are faced with a complex task in making disciples.

Whereas up until about 1950 the predominant demography was Anglo-Saxon Christian culture – and thus the Good News of God was at least well-known – an open immigration policy has seen a plethora of people from European, Asian, African & Middle-Eastern countries settle in our land, bringing different religious cultures. While we can thank God that the 'nations' have come here to be discipled, we are experiencing the removal of the Christian ethos from the public square and being replaced with a secularist ethos. We are faced with the question: What part of the Good News about God will be appropriate for the various cultures, including those who have been secularised towards atheism?

Sub-cultures are 'people groups' too

Not only are we faced with people of different cultures: there are many sub-cultures – people groups with a common identity – within the wider Australian culture. Academics, journalists, welfare recipients, entertainers, the judiciary, parliamentarians, the rich and the poor, government employees – all these are examples of people who need different approaches when presenting the Good News about God to them. Nonetheless, all of them need to hear. But we bring them the Good News that is relevant to their situation. Here are some ways:

1. **Proclaim the Good News personally**
2. **Cultivate an alternate Christian culture**

*In Australia today,
we are faced with a
complex task in
making disciples*

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HOW DO WE DISCIPLE NATIONS? (...continued)

1) Proclaim the Good News Personally

Access to and interaction with people

We must have the necessary freedom to relate to the people of Australia. In New Testament times, there was easy access to people through the 'Pax Romana' and the religious freedom guaranteed therewith. Christians went to the market place, the streets – wherever there were people. There they taught and communicated the good news.

We have a kind of 'Pax Australiana'. We have access to the streets and market-places – and to the schools, hotels, work-places, universities – but the secularists are trying to close them up. We must fight for the right to proclaim our beliefs in the public square. Freedom of religion, speech and association are necessary to the spread of God's good news. We need to fight against impingements on our freedoms, but at the same time seek to bring God's goodness to the wider society in different ways, while ensuring that we convey the reality of God in word and deed.

Build bridges of trust and love

One of those ways is through personal relationships. The workplace, neighbourhoods, marketplaces, P & C associations, and the various social clubs and charities are excellent places for personal communication between people. As people continue to search for the 'good', we can shine the light of Christ by our interest in our neighbour's welfare, and win their trust (Luke 16:9) (Matthew 5:16). As the life-draining realities of the secular worldview settles in the lives of our friends and acquaintances, the people in whom God is at work will recognise the truth in our lives.

Communicate the nature and will of God by word and deed

At every opportunity, bring God's Word to bear in our everyday communications – at work, in the market-place, in school playgrounds; in the echelons of power – parliaments, local council meetings, P&C associations; all aspects of media – newspapers, TV, the back fence. Especially, we should model our lives on the paradigm of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – proclaim and live the will of God at home so our children can see the reality of God in your home. My wife's grandfather became a Christian in his 30's. The change was noticed by a neighbour who one day knocked on Joe Nash's door and simply said "Nash, I want what you've got!" He was led to faith in Jesus. It can happen again!

2) Cultivate an alternate Christian culture

(a) Affect the culture-producing institutions of society

Governance, family & marriage, education, entertainment & the arts, sport, business & economics, the environment, communications need the influence of Christians and Christian worldview. If we are going to take seriously permeating society with the gospel of the kingdom of God, these areas of cultural influence must be included. Even if those in power within them refuse to heed our message, they at least need to hear truth. To affect these areas over time, we should be training our young people to become Parliamentarians, business people, economist, teachers and educationalists. We should be teaching them about marriage and family from God's perspective; sporting excellence; film-making etc.

During the 60's in Australia, there was a cultural revolution which challenged the traditional values instituted by the Christian faith. The activists who fomented this revolution then infiltrated churches, universities, Parliaments and local councils, businesses, government departments, the arts and entertainment industry, bringing their ideology to bear on all aspects within. The ABC is a prime example. We can – and we must – do the same. If we don't, the Christian message will be silenced.

(b) Oppose with spiritual weapons and reasoned arguments the foolish babble of secularists (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

British industrialist Sir Fred Catherwood said about persuading others in the public square: 'Have the best arguments' ^[2]. If we speak words that glorify God and represent his will, nature and purposes, it will have an effect for the purposes of God (Isaiah 55:10-11) (Mark 4:1-20). It will produce either a softened or hardened heart. What God calls us to do is proclaim the truth and live the truth. That is, be faithful to him, and he will do his part.

*At every opportunity,
bring God's Word to
bear in our everyday
communications*

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HOW DO WE DISCIPLE NATIONS? (...continued)

Tasmanian Catholic Archbishop Julian Porteous sums up well: *“We cannot allow ourselves to be hidden. We must be seen and heard. We do need to stand up for what we believe and know is true. We cannot allow ourselves to be intimidated. We have a truth about human life to offer our society.”* [3]

(c) Seek to enact Good laws

Laws are educative. Earlier in 2015 a report came from USA that in a state which had restricted abortion, there was not only a reduction of unwanted pregnancies, but also of STD's. Good laws – laws that tell us what is good – are aids towards thinking God's thoughts about life. On the other hand, permissive laws tell people that the allowed activity is legal therefore okay to practise. The flesh will always find ways to circumvent the law, but our national laws should not encourage such an activity.

Good laws prosper nations (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). This has been especially true of Australia since its settlement. We have been the target of migrants to this day because of our prosperous, stable and peaceful society, due in no small degree to its Christian foundations.

Bad laws are a national curse (Proverbs 14:34). In Tasmania, there is a law that bans abortion protests within 100 metres of an abortion clinic. The law unjustly restricts free speech. Pro-life advocate Graham Preston went to Hobart and stood near a clinic displaying a sign that read *“Everyone has the right to life, Article 3 Universal Declaration of Human Rights”*, on the front, and, *“Every child has the right to life, Article 6 Convention on the rights of the Child”*, on the back. He also held an enlarged photo of an 8-week-old pre-born baby. He was subject to taunts, threats and rubbish being thrown at him. He was arrested and charged. Graham rightly questions why he can't freely express his belief in the right to life of unborn children.

(d) Influence Society for God's Glory

Jesus says that by doing God's will we will be like salt and light in society. Salt preserves, stops something from going bad. Light shows the way to go (Matthew 5:16). We must shine our light – the Lord Jesus Christ (John 8:12) – so they can see Him in reality, by doing the good God created – and recreated – us for. As Paul wrote (1 Corinthians 10:31), we are to do everything to the glory of God.

For example, the early Christians lived in a pagan society, much like ours is becoming. While abortion was practiced, most unwanted children were brought to birth and left at the city gates where exposure to the elements or animals brought their death. The Christians would rescue these unwanted babies. At length, the society became Christian partly through the loving acts of people who, because of Jesus, regarded all human life as precious. We can, and we might have to, do the same.

“Influence is hardwired into the human condition. One way or the other, influence will flow. Either we will influence the godless, egocentric culture around us or it will most certainly force us into its mould. All around us every day, there is a battle for influence going on. Light vs darkness, flesh vs spirit, temporal vs eternal, spin vs truth, political correctness vs prophetic correctness! Either you will invent the future or someone else's vision of the future will re-invent you!” [4]

Conclusion

When we pray **“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”**, we are asking for God to reign on earth just as He does in heaven. He wants to start with us, and then extend that to others so His will and purposes for life on earth can be done. Our mission field extends to everyone and everywhere, including our civic and political responsibilities. God has privileged us to be involved with Him in the process of making His kingdom come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May we be the answer to this prayer!

Our mission field extends to everyone and everywhere, including our civic and political responsibilities

References

- [1] The article is a shortened reprint of chapter 5 of Dr. Piper's book *Let the Nations be Glad*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. The entire chapter was printed in *IJFM* Vol. 9:3, 1992, and is available upon request.
- [2] 'Courage in a Hostile World' – David Phillips, *FamilyVoice Australia* 2014 p.119
- [3] Bishop Julian Porteous February 7, 2014 – <http://bishopjulianporteous.com/?p=364>
- [4] Mal Fletcher - http://www.rediscoveringthekingdom.info/index.cfm?event=v_pge&pid=AF3D1DF7-1422-130F-33C3CD5809CBB000

WHAT IS NEW TESTAMENT 'PROPHECY'?

By Simon Manchester, St Thomas' Anglican Church North Sydney - from their weekly church bulletin.

Dear Friends,

You may know that Paul tells the Christians in Corinth he would like them to 'prophesy' (1 Cor 14:5) and he tells the Christians in Thessalonica not to "treat prophecies with contempt" (1 Thess 5:20).

So why are we making so little of prophecy – especially when other churches are making much of it?

This is a subject that requires great care (and can not be reduced to a single text) and I would like to pass on my reflections that simply come from many years of bible reading and teaching.

1. New Testament prophecy is not the same as Old Testament prophecy. Most Old Testament prophets would speak a word that was from God's own mouth and it could be added to scripture. The New Testament prophets seem to be contributing to the plans of believers (e.g. Acts 13:1 setting apart Paul and Barnabas for mission) or contributing to the 'input' at church (e.g. 1 Cor 14:29ff).
2. The Old Testament prophet ("thus says the Lord") finds his parallel in the New Testament apostle ("what I am writing to you is the Lord's command"). These Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles put our bibles together.
3. One of the most significant verses is Ephesians 2:20 (the great letter of the 'church') where Paul says that the foundation of the church is "the apostles and prophets". Notice he doesn't say "prophets" (as in Old Testament) and "apostles" (as in New Testament) but "apostles and prophets" – two groups of people that God raised up for the Christian church. But then he says they are the "foundation". So are we meant to assume that their role is early and temporary – just as we don't expect to see classic apostles (Acts 1:21 – 22) today we should not expect prophets?
4. This may explain why the New Testament is full of references to the gift of prophecy (Eph 4:11, Rom 12:6, 1 Cor 12:10) – as indeed many miraculous gifts – but they belong to the first century. You will notice that the pastoral letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus) have no references to the ongoing need for prophets. As Paul looks into the second generation of the church, the foundation is laid and the need is for teaching the 'deposit' laid down.
5. Why then is Paul so keen for the Corinthians to prophesy and what type of ministry is he talking about? The Corinthian problem was a new spiritual life where a gift like tongues made it very exciting for 'me'. The apostle Paul had to explain that the new spiritual life – marked by love (1 Cor 13) – was to be more interested in 'others'. The two gifts which expressed this best were tongues (blessing for me) and prophecy (blessing for others).
6. The two gifts (tongues and prophecy) are never perfectly defined but we can conclude some important factors about prophecy in Corinth.
 - (a) It was speech that strengthened, encouraged and comforted (1 Cor 14:3).
 - (b) It made sense to the insider (1 Cor 14:4) and even to the outsider (1 Cor 14:3).
 - (c) It was not 'on par' with scripture but in fact it had to be 'weighed carefully' (1 Cor 14:29). [Incidentally Paul expected the men of the church to take responsibility for decisions that arose from prophecies which is why the women were to be silent at that point].
 - (d) It was something both men and women could contribute (1 Cor 11:5ff)
 - (e) It was not ecstatic or 'out of control' (especially as the fruit of the Spirit is self-control) – but an 'orderly' two or three could contribute (1 Cor 14:29–30).
 - (f) It was not the same as the teaching office (1 Cor 12:28, Eph 4:11)
 - (g) It was not for everyone to have as a gift (1 Cor 12:29)
7. If we were to insist on a modern day ministry of prophecy (which I think is unnecessary) we might conclude that it is the wise and helpful word that helps us individually or corporately go forward. But is it too grand to call that 'prophecy'? The great emphasis of scripture is to keep valuing scripture!

Yours in fellowship,
Simon Manchester
OCTOBER 18



Papua New Guinea World Mission

P.O. Box 2456 Lae 411 Morobe Province.
Papua New Guinea

FAITH TAKES YOU BEYOND LIMITS

November 2015

Dear Friends and Partners in God's Mission,

Take a few moments to think, "If Jesus came to you in person today and asked you the same question like he did to Peter (John 21:17). "Simon, son of John, 'Do you love me?'" What would be your respond? It is my prayer for you that you will grow and mature in your faith and love for Jesus!

The month of September was exciting and adventurous. Mission Team traveled to Warburton and further to the T-Junction, at the centre of Australia. We were in WA and stepped our foot on NT and SA. According to our Indigenous Leader, T-Junction is the entry point for illegal drug trafficking to the different States in Australia. The highlight for us was walking 100 meters up and down in the heat of the sun out in the desert praying and worshipping God. We marched seven times declaring the Power of the Name of Jesus and putting stop to all 'illegal drug trafficking'. It was truly a powerful time spent with God in the desert!

Here are some highlights from Leonora-WA, our starting point where PNGWM Base is, drove out onto the Great Central highway to T-Junction passing through Warburton. We clocked in about 4000kms plus and four days out on the road, camping in open space, equipped with camping gears and food stuff and most importantly were water bottles.



Our trailer was packed with 15 cartons of 500ml water bottles! Praise God we survived with no shower for three full days and on the fourth day God answered our desperate prayer for water so we can wash.

We had four tyre punctures in two hours in the night. All spare tyres were exhausted as we were three quarter through before reaching our destination at T-Junction. We "anointed the tyres" and continued the trip. An act of FAITH and seeing the hand of God at work was so powerful! God is real and we need to step out in faith so that we can testify to others.



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PNGWM FEBRUARY 2015 (...continued)

From the T-Junction we then drove into some of the Indigenous communities on our way back to Leonora.



Met these Indigenous children and presented Bible to a young woman, a new believer in Christ.

THANKYOU & APPRECIATION;

We acknowledge the overwhelming support from the PNGWM Perth & Kalgoorlie Logistic Team for organizing vehicle & trailer, camping gears, food and other stuff needed for this Mission Outback Trip. Thank you for all the sacrifices and for humbling us by driving all the way up to Leonora to escort the Team back to Kalgoorlie and Perth when we were exhausted from the long desert drive. Also we acknowledge the generous support from people like you too. God bless your heart of giving generously!

**NEW LIFE MELANESIA, SUNSHINE COAST (AUSTRALIA), SUNDAY 29TH NOVEMBER 2015**

PNGWM Committees will travel down to Sunshine Coast at the end of this month to strengthen Partnership with our ministry partners at New Life Melanesia. Pray for anointing upon the Sunday worship service.

MISSIONARIES TRAVEL TO LEONORA-WA IN 3 WEEKS

Our missionaries will travel back to Leonora-WA in the first week of December (3 weeks from now) to continue the Backyard Cleaning and Gardening Project. All their visas are ready. Please pray for provision towards their airfares so that their tickets can be purchased at a cheaper fare.



Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase - Martin Luther King Jr.

Every blessing in Christ,

Ms TEMA MANKO

PNG World Mission Inc

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Finding Significance in God's Gift of Grandparenting

By Lillian Penner

It was an exciting time for my husband and I received the special gift of grandparenting. After raising three boys and we were thrilled our first grandchild was a girl, I soon learned that along with these wonderful gift came a sacred trust to imprint another generation with the message of God's faithfulness. Reflecting on my new responsibility, I realized my prayers were too general and vague and I became frustrated with how I was praying for my grandchildren.

After I asked God for wisdom and read several books about grandparenting and prayer, my praying changed dramatically. I discovered God's Word was a great resource to help me with my praying, not only for my family, but also for myself.

In Hebrews 4:12 we read, "The Word of God is full of living power." When I pray according to God's Word, I am in line with His will, enabling me to pray with direction, power, and wisdom. I not only find myself in intimate communication with God, but my mind is renewed to think His thoughts about the situation for which I am praying, instead of my own thoughts. Ultimately, God shrinks the situation that I thought was overwhelming and impossible into a viable possibility and He gives me peace as I wait for His answer.

As I started claiming God's promises and personalizing the scriptures, I experienced more boldness and confidence in my praying. Nothing threatens the enemy (Satan) more than when we are intentionally praying God's Word for our children, grandchildren, and ourselves. There are many Scriptures in Psalms, Proverbs, the Gospels and Paul's writings that can be used in praying God's Word.

God gave me a Passion

As a result God gave me a passion for praying intentionally for my grandchildren and their parents and a desire to share it with other grandparents.

While surfing on the Internet looking for more resources, God directed me to the Christian Grandparenting Network. After sharing my passion with them, they invited me to become their National Prayer Coordinator, writing devotionals and prayer suggestions on their website. Christian Grandparenting Network (CGN) is devoted to challenging Christian grandparents to live intentionally as representatives of Christ for future generations. It is committed to providing a network of resources and opportunities for grandparents to have powerful opportunities for inter-generational dialogue to strengthen grandparent-grandchild relationships and spiritual growth.

Urgency for Prayer

The enemy is determined and relentless to distract and steal the faith of our grandchildren and their parents as our media-driven culture has pushed the boundaries of a Christ-like lifestyle. Therefore, there is urgency for grandparents to stand in the gap praying for the spiritual, emotional, and physical protection of these who are under attack.

The Movies, Music, TV, Video games, and Internet are desensitizing our grandchildren. They are faced with legal recreational marijuana, drugs, sex trafficking, alcohol, sexual identity, homosexuality, pornography, pre-martial sex and more.

So what can grandparents do while we live in these challenging times with a culture of spiritual, social and moral decline? Are we completely without hope and at the mercy of the merciless and the politically correct? No, We are not without hope because we read in Psalms 46:1 "We have a God who is our refuge and strength, our stronghold in times of trouble."

The enemy wants grandparents to be too busy with our activities to intentionally pray and grandparent with a purpose. However, we, as grandparents can make a difference in the world by praying regularly and deliberately and specifically for our grandchildren and their parents. It is our responsibility to powerfully touch the lives of another generation for eternity.

Sometimes, we as grandparents become frustrated with our loved ones behavior. God may say to us, don't provoke them about the music; appearances, body piercing or whatever concerns you. It is important for us to communicate to

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Finding Significance in God's Gift of Grandparenting (...continued)

our loved ones that we love them, accept them, and pray for them even though we may not accept their behavior.

- Ask God to reveal Himself to your grandchildren and their parents in a way they will understand.
- Ask God to protect them from the enemy who is watching for vulnerable spots and the unguarded doors of each of our hearts.

When we get older and face physical limitations, we might feel less useful, however, God has a purpose for us. Just as Esther stood in the gap for her people when their lives were threatened, we can stand in the gap for our grandchildren and their parents as their lives are threatened spiritually. Perhaps at no other time in our history is a call to prayer more urgently needed than it is today, together we can link arms in prayer for the sake of the next generation.

See the ripple effect

I found a letter in my family archives, written by my great-grandfather in Poland, addressed to my grandfather who had immigrated to America. In the letter, he wrote he was praying for my grandfather, his children, and his future generations. It was a special blessing for me to see in writing that my great-grandfather prayed for me before I was born.

My great-grandfather's prayers had a ripple effect on my grandparents, my parents, my life, my children, my grandchildren and now hopefully my great-grandchildren. If you do not have a Christian heritage, you have the privilege of starting the ripple effect in your family. God has given us the awesome opportunity to partner with Him on behalf of these dear ones as intentional prayer warriors.

My oldest granddaughter warmed my heart and I felt like she had given me a beautiful bouquet of roses when she sent me the following note. She writes: *"Your phone calls, cards, and e-mails were encouraging and made a significant impact on my life, especially in my teenage and college years. Your prayers and encouragement have been rock-solid reminders of God's truth in my incredible, crazy life-shaping years, and now in my married life. Your prayers help me surrender the craziness of my life to God."*

A few years ago on a sunny autumn day, my husband and I were traveling in the beautiful Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Mesmerized by the reflections of the rugged snow-covered mountains and golden aspen trees on a pristine lake, I could not help but ask myself: Do my children and grandchildren see God's love reflected in my life in the same way? Do they see Jesus in me?

Pondering the answer to this questions it led me to realize that the sun must shine on the water to create a reflection. In order for God's love to reflect from my life, the love of God's Son, Jesus Christ, must be shining in my heart which means I must be reading his Word regularly.

My husband and I thank God he has given us an opportunity to be prayer warriors for our twelve grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Serving Him in this way and leading the cause through CGN's prayer ministry has given my life fulfillment and significance. May the light of the Son reflect in you, and may you know the joy of serving as God's prayer warrior for grandchildren and future generations.

Grandparenting Resources:

Prayer cards: *Scriptures to Pray for Your Grandchildren and Suggestions to Pray for Your Grandchildren in School: Preschool, Elementary, Teenagers, and College Students* by Lillian Penner. Free downloadable copies are available by emailing lpenner@christiangrandparenting.net

GRANDPARENTING WITH A PURPOSE: Effective Ways to Pray for your Grandchildren by Lillian Penner. The book challenges grandparents to stand in the gap by living a godly example and praying intentionally for their grandparents and their parents. It provides creative suggestions for prayers based on Scriptures, and other helpful tool, utilizing everything from cell phones to photo prayer journals. Email lpenner@christiangrandparenting.net for information.

Last year CGN proclaimed the second Sunday in September as **Grandparents Day of Prayer**, coinciding with National Grandparents Day in the U. S. designated by a Senate proclamation in 1978. It is a way of engaging grandparents to unite in an intentional day of prayer for their grandchildren.

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Finding Significance in God's Gift of Grandparenting (...continued)

Many participants reported how they were blessed as they united in prayer with other grandparents in a common cause. The next **Grandparents Day of Prayer** will be **Sunday, September 11, 2016**.

Small groups called **Grandparents@Prayer (G@P)** assist grandparents in praying for their grandchildren. Just as Esther stood in the gap for her people, the Jews, when they were threatened, likewise grandparents can stand in the gap with prayer for their grandchildren today. G@P groups are meeting in many areas of the United States and England praying together for their grandchildren on a regular basis. Anyone desiring information or would like to become a part of a group may go to the CGN website. **www.christiangrandparenting.net**

CGN provides many other resources for grandparents such as weekly blogs, GrandCamps for grandparents and grandchildren, and conferences. A new book for grandparents, *Courageous Grandparenting: Unshakable Faith in a Broken World*, written by Cavin Harper, Founder and Executive Director of CGN available on the CGN website.

This article was published in the July 2012 issue (pages 30-32) of the *Significant Living* magazine, a faith-based magazine for seniors. If you would like to read the entire magazine and/or subscribe go to: **<http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/85bc9d6f#/85bc9d6f/30>**

When we get older and face physical limitations, we might feel less useful, however, God has a purpose for us. Just as Esther stood in the gap for her people when their lives were threatened, we can stand in the gap for our grandchildren and their parents as their lives are threatened spiritually. Perhaps at no other time in our history is a call to prayer more urgently needed than it is today, together we can link arms in prayer for the sake of the next generation.

Lillian's biographical sketch:

Lillian Penner is the author of Grandparenting with a Purpose: Effective Ways to Pray for your Grandchildren, the National Prayer Coordinator for Christian Grandparenting Network, speaker, and blogger. She has been active in church ministry for over fifty years. Currently residents of Portland, Oregon, Lillian and her husband, John, have three sons, nine grandchildren. And three great-granddaughters. They enjoy spending time with their family, traveling and listening to Southern Gospel music. They both were raised in Christian homes and desire to pass on their godly heritage to their future generations. You will find her book Grandparenting with a Purpose and her blog at www.grandparentingwithapurpose.com

WOULD YOU BLESS OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR NATION DAILY?

Open Heaven Ministries Int. Ltd
www.openheaven.org.au

In Jesus Name,

I bless our community and our nation with peace and prosperity.

Let every sign of crime be found and destroyed.

Let God's grace and order be established.

Let evil and wickedness come to an end.

Let orphans get parents; the homeless get homes; the jobless get jobs.

Let the reign of abuse and terror be over.

Let the rule of the gangs and drug lords be ended.

Let our land be healed and let it rain in season.

**Let our community and our nation be blessed with every good and advantageous thing
 - for the sake of our children. Amen**

Based on Psalm 10:16, 18 Message Translation

*Ps. Suzette Torti, Agent of Change / Pastor, Open Heaven Ministries International Ltd.
 Releasing Heaven Everywhere We Go
 PO Box 3482, Robina Town Centre Qld. Australia 4230*

HOPE FOR THE WORLD-PLEASE PRAY!

Dear Friends and Praying Partners,

After five years of lying dormant, God has led me to relaunch the annual event of 'Awakening the Nations' back here in Australia in March next year 2016. Prompted by a chronological order of timely truths that we are living in a 'Defining Season which releases Defining Moments which calls for Defining Decisions' for Faith to be materialised I felt led to bring to your knowledge for prayer and action this event which I shared and promoted verbally for the last 12 months. This is the first written document about this event and I believe in those who can stand with me in prayer to be first notified. So please pray with me for this event as I start to send out documents that this event is on.

I have already been notified that 70 delegates from PNG from one congregation alone are making preparations for this event and the Solomon Islands House of Prayer have started their all night prayers early this year once a month towards this event. Will you join me in prayer for this faith venture as I have been required to make financial instalments to the conference centre as time progresses on. My second instalment to secure the 150 beds for the islanders will be on the 12th November. My God is able to do far more than I can ever ask of Him. Thank you for praying for this miracle.

Please find the attached document regarding this event.

NewLife MELANESIA

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7th November 2015.

DEFINING SEASON, DEFINING MOMENTS & DEFINING DECISIONS FOR A WORLD REVIVAL INITIAL AND ANNUAL GATHERING IN AUSTRALIA – MARCH 11-14, 2016.

In September 2008 the Governor General, His Excellency Sir Nathaniel Waenga of Solomon Islands launched an event called 'Awakening the Nations' in the city of Bundaberg under the banner of 'Bundaberg City House of Prayer.' It was a spiritual clarion call to the seven nations namely; Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to be awakened to God's divine kingdom purposes in the Great Southland of the Holy Spirit. It was a week of Prayer, Worship, Fellowship and Redeemed Cultural Festival held at the Bundaberg Show grounds. The ATN moved from Bundaberg to Vanuatu to Solomon Islands then stopped in Papua New Guinea in 2011.

Now under the auspices of 'NewLife MELANESIA' we believe that God wants us to relaunch this event with special focus on 'PRAYER, REVIVAL & EVANGELISM' which will become an annual event here in Australia for the island nations of the South Pacific. We believe it is time to re-dig the spiritual wells of revivals in the past and to dig new wells for a world revival starting here in Australia. The scriptures that God gave us during our first prayer meeting was 2.Kings 3 and the phrase that stood out in this story was, '**Make this valley full of ditches... You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink.**'

We believe God is calling the Island nations to come annually to dig spiritual ditches in prayer, worship and evangelism in Australia and beyond and He will fill them with the water of life. This is a gathering of the 'spiritual diggers' for a world revival from the ends of the earth from an Australian platform to the nations of the world.

We have booked 150 beds at the 'ALEXANDRA CONFERENCE CENTRE' on the Sunshine Coast for the islanders as our launching venue in Australia from **March 11-14, 2016. This is a move of faith and we invite men and women, churches and enterprises of faith to join us in prayer and financial investment in this annual event.**

Thank you for your prayers and partnerships in this Kingdom Advance event.

Yours for His Kingdom Advance,
Roy & Janet Funu.

Founding Leaders of Bundaberg City House of Prayer & NewLife MELANESIA.

Recreation – the secret to sustainable ministry

By Stephen Leslie, August 27, 2015

Life can be very challenging! Even the most grounded and resilient people can be drained and exhausted by difficult people and traumatic events, and find themselves in need of refreshment and renewal. For many people who work in Christian ministry or leadership or in the ‘helping’ professions, output can all too easily exceed input. It is dangerous to allow this imbalance to continue, because it can deplete us of energy, focus and even love and compassion. This is the beginning of burn-out, and the evidence is in feelings of depression, errors of judgement, or non-typical outbursts of anger or frustration.

For many Christians the word ‘recreation’ is seen as synonymous with ‘frivolous’ or ‘playing games’ - not at all part of the serious business of life! It is wasting precious time and more than a little bit selfish and self-indulgent. I want to propose that such understandings and definitions obscure the power and necessity of recreation to long-term, sustainable, effective living, work and ministry.

A balanced life must include regular rest, exercise, down-time and relaxation within the ebb and flow of life. The biblical principle of Sabbath suggests that the need for re-creation and rest is part of the very fabric of our being.

Jesus modelled this balance in His ministry years. Periods of intense working with people, travelling, teaching, healing and preaching were preceded by periods of retreat to the mountains, for time alone with His Father. In other words, he got away from it all, took long walks in the mountains (physical exertion!) and spent significant time in prayer and preparation. In fact, he devoted time and focus to recreation. It was His discipline in such sustainable practices which enabled Him to minister effectively – with power, focus and conviction.

If you or I think we don't need balance and restorative input in our lives, then we delude ourselves. The student is not above his master!

Here's a list of some of the words we use to describe the process of recreation:

Renewal; restoration; refreshment; revival; reinvention; reframing; and linking to our use of computers, rebooting! All of these words carry the sense of discovering new life, new energy, new passion, greater strength and focus. And that is exactly what we need when we are feeling worn out and flat, discouraged and running on empty! We need to be re-created and have a new breath of Spirit to fill us and re-charge (there's another one!) our depleted batteries.

I have seen many good people, committed, responsible and diligent people lose the fire, drive and excitement they once had. I have been there myself.

Are you in this place, just putting one foot after another, doing the business but on auto-pilot, exhausted, drained of emotion and empathy? It's time for some RE-CREATION!

There are no rules for how you do this, but it does need to be regular, not one-off, and attend to all dimensions of our being – physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. You may need a decent period of time off, where you can travel or head for the hills, the beach or a favourite place where you can get out into the fresh air and let the beauty of Creation renew you. It's ok to let the sun and the stimulation of light exercise release endorphins and get your metabolism firing. If you are physically exhausted you might need to just stop, read a book, meditate on God's Word and reconnect with the Father who loves you.

This is all about ‘going to the well’ and let God refill you with His Spirit, with new vision and a sense of purpose. This is recreation. This is renewal. For the child of God, it is all about rediscovering with God's purpose for you and thus His empowering. Without purposeful recreation we can lose this invigorating perspective and the joy we once knew in our work.

(continued next page)

Recreation – the secret to sustainable ministry (...continued)

So, it's not just ok to stop, to play, to exercise, to re-charge the batteries – it is vital to our health and happiness. It is also essential if we want to be effective now and into the future, overcoming, staying the distance, living with a balance life and work, in a true partnership with Christ.

Re-creation – the secret of sustainable ministry!

Stephen Leslie

National Development Officer

PO Box 5552, South Windsor NSW 2756.

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Do you put sport BEFORE God?

There are many things we do in our lives which causes conflict and we have to learn to prioritise them, so that we can do all things in their appropriate timeframes. The problem arises when two specific items which we must do, clash in the same timeframe.

What happens when the football game that you have been selected to play in, clashes with your Sunday church service? Which one do you choose to do?

If your church has two services on a Sunday then it is easy, you go to the Football game in the morning, and then go to the church service at night. You have fulfilled your obligations to do both tasks. But what if your church only has one service on a Sunday and the time clashes with your football game? Which do you choose? Do you miss church and play football, or do you tell your coach you cannot play, because you have to go to church at that time.

So, do you choose football over God?

The scripture is very clear: it is the very first of the 10 commandments: (Living Translation) *“Then God issued this edict: I AM Jehovah, your God, who liberated you from your slavery in Egypt. You may worship no other god than Me.”*

Here is the unchangeable word of God. If you choose football instead of God, you have created a god made of leather – the football.

But you will have others come to you and say – “Ah, that's Old Testament, we live under the New Testament, we live under grace, you don't have to obey those 'old laws'. We can do what we like, because Christ completed everything on the cross, by dying in our place.”

If that was the case, then robbery and murder would no longer be crimes, because they are 'old laws'.

In the Old Testament and also in the New Testament it clearly says: Obedience is better than sacrifice.

So, who are you going to be obedient to? Your coach, or your God?

Who do you think is going to make the decision about your eternity?

Who should you want to honour, praise and glorify?

Your football team? Or your God? That is the decision that every sportsman and woman has to make.

You can take a stand, like a British runner did at the 1936 Olympics, and refused to run in the final of a race, because it was being held on Sunday morning, or you can roll over and give Satan the victory. It is a personal choice --- You must decide your own eternity.

Rev. Dr Jeffrey David Camm JP

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MCC Sporting Prayers

From Nathan Ahearne, Director of Faith Formation, Marist College Canberra



(continued next page)

MCC Sporting Prayers (...continued)



Credit: Seamus Smith and James Palisi



Credit: Joshua Lorenz & Jason Nguyen

(continued next page)

MCC Sporting Prayers (...continued)



The sphere of sport and recreation

- I pray for the underdogs, the disregarded, the wooden spoon
- I pray that everyone may contribute; team or solo to the development of physical skill and knowledge
- I pray that poor decisions are taken lightly and not received with negative comments
- I pray that people are not discriminated against for their ethnicity or skill
- I pray that everyone can and will have the right to play
- I pray for the injured, the people knocked down or the people on the sideline to get back up and not let it break your spirit
- I pray for the devoted to make the top desired team and if not; to keep trying
- I pray that sport will always bring us together; as a community, family, as a nation.

Credit: <not supplied>

Dear God,
 We pray for your help in all of our sporting endeavours. Help us to do our best and reach our potential in the sports we play. Thank you for the privilege we have in being able to play and enjoy the sports we love. We pray that you keep us un-injured and healthy, so that we can keep playing our sports.

We pray that professional sporting events remain safe and enjoyable. We pray that our own teams, and the teams we support win games and be successful. Help us to handle the situation well, win, lose or draw.

Help us to score many goals, tries and points throughout our lives, all the way until ~~the first whistle blows~~ our own game ends.

Credit: Tom Robertson

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MCC Sporting Prayers (...continued)



Dear God,

We thank you for what you've given us in terms of the ability to play sport.



We thank you for letting us to be able to play sport.

We pray for those with disabilities, we pray they can overcome their challenges.

Amen

Credit: Ben Fely



The boys have also been enjoying exploring 'A Crown for Australia'

<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/files/SJSandresources/2014-15-SJS-Statement.pdf>

Collective thinking from 'A Crown for Australia':

- Sport is like a double edged sword it brings people together but can also divide
- We learn to play sport before we learn to read and write, develop our passion early on and shows how important sport is by doing, teaches how to be part of a team and work, how to play fair perseverance and resilience, how to lose gracefully.
- Church recognises sport as a great institution builds up community
- Sport is a powerful instrument for the growth of the human person, to be better people

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MCC Sporting Prayers (...continued)



Credit: Hayden Crockett (Writer) Tom Robertson & Harry Williams (Graphics)



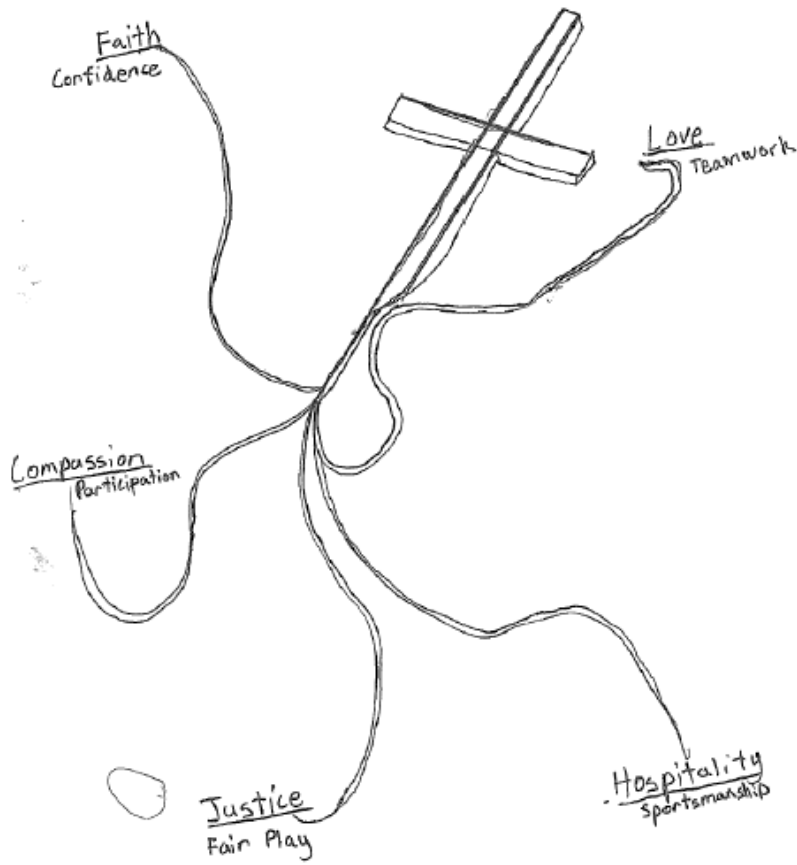
Credit: James Yap (writer) and Quinten Moffatt (graphics)

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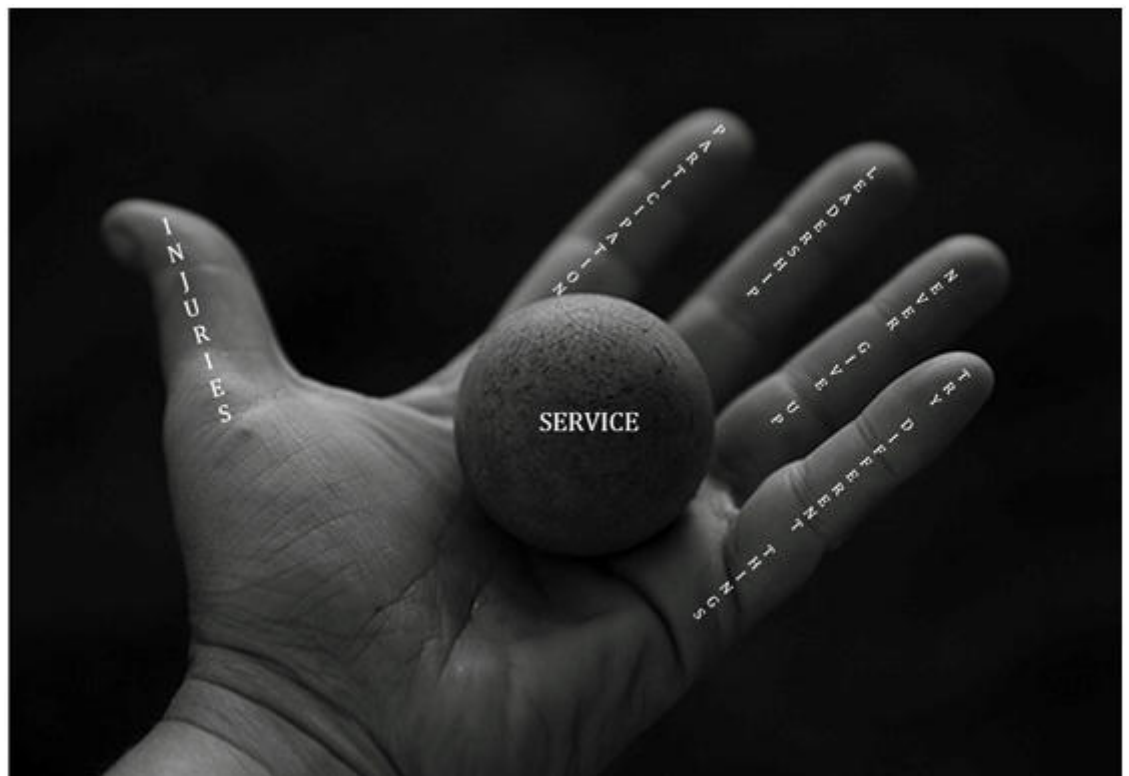
MCC Sporting Prayers (...continued)



Marist's Sport Core Values



Credit: Josh Ting (Writer and Graphics)



Credit: Lincoln Waters (Creator)



Voice of the Martyrs

Serving the Persecuted Church

Will you give a gift of joy?

I've seen the joy on the face of a child who opens a Christmas Care pack and finds it filled with Bible story books, toys, clothing, stationery and sweets. Their delight is priceless.

Christmas Care Nigeria

Christmas Care packs are the perfect gift for children in Nigeria, many of whom have experienced the horrors of Boko Haram attacks.

What's more, our Christmas Care program will also support a full year's costs for 100 children at our Stephen's Children's Home in Nigeria.

Your gift to Christmas Care will let these children know they are loved.

Go to www.vom.com.au/christmas-care to read children's responses when they received a pack.

Give to Christmas Care - <https://vom.com.au/donate-to-christmas-care-nigeria/>

Thank you for supporting this important project this Christmas.

John Wilson, CEO, Voice of the Martyrs Australia



"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:10

UZBEKISTAN: Mothers Prevented from Feeding Babies

A group of Christians in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, were detained and tortured last month after police raided their worship meeting in a private home.

Prayer Points

- ♥ Ask God to protect and strengthen the Christians who were recently arrested in Tashkent. May each of these believers, including the children involved in this raid, know God's abiding presence and peace.
- ♥ Pray the Uzbek authorities will take firm action to ensure the officers of the law will respect and uphold the religious rights of the country's citizens.
- ♥ Pray all charges against the Christian leader and church members will be dropped so their worship meetings can continue.

CUBA: Neighbourhood Churches Targeted for Demolition

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in the city of Santiago de Cuba where government officials have reportedly issued demolition orders to all churches in one neighbourhood.

Prayer Points

- ♥ Please pray for our church family in Santiago de Cuba. Pray that the demolition orders will not be carried out and church families will not be evicted.
- ♥ Pray that the church in Cuba as a whole will stand firm in the face of opposition from some elements of the Community Party.
- ♥ Pray that the church in Cuba will experience unprecedented growth and liberty as the nation opens up to the international community in the longer term.

IRAQ: Proposed Law Would Force Some Children to Become Muslim

A new law in Iraq would require the conversion of children to Islam if their father were to convert or if their mother were to marry a Muslim man or a Muslim-background Christian.

Prayer Points

- ♥ Pray the Iraqi president Fuad Masum and his colleagues will reject the newly proposed law.
- ♥ Pray for Christian children in Iraq who are being pressured to convert by the government or their community; pray that they will remain strong in their faith and never deny Christ.
- ♥ Ask the Lord to bring a great Christian revival to Iraq; pray the current uncertainty and great unrest will be used by the Lord for the spiritual good of the Iraqi people.

Subscribe to our free monthly newsletter to receive regular testimonies from the persecuted church

<https://vom.com.au/subscribe>



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